

WRESTLING OBSERVER 1990 YEARBOOK

\$14.00

Dave Meltzer, Editor

TOP WRESTLING
NEWS STORIES

WRESTLING OBSERVER
AWARDS

CHAMPIONS OF 1990

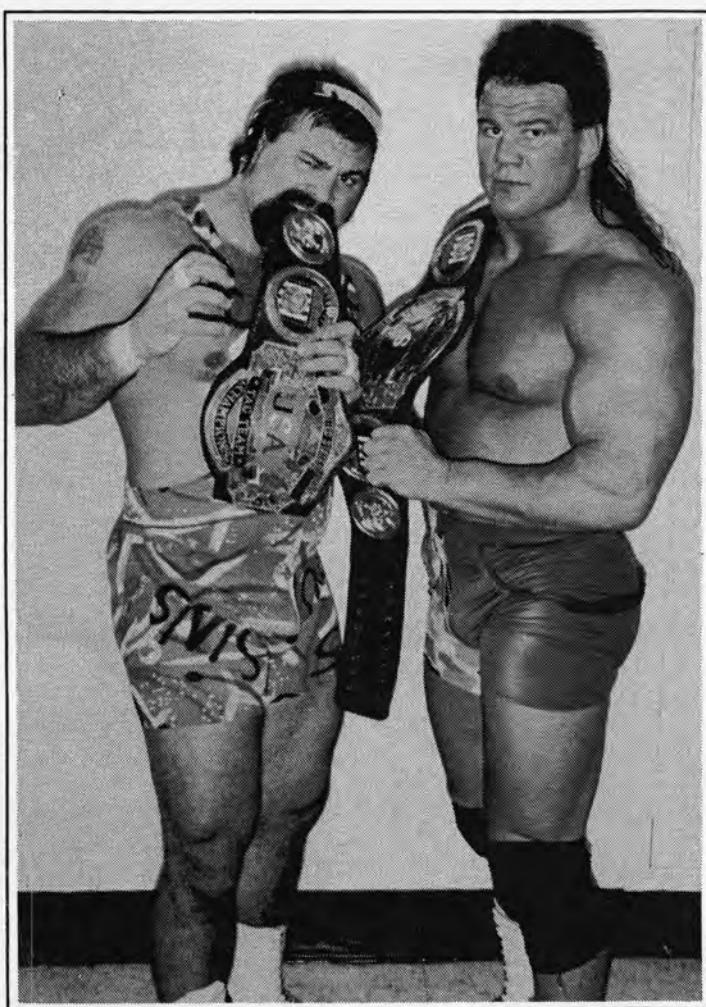
STORIES AND ARTICLES

BEST MATCHES OF 1990

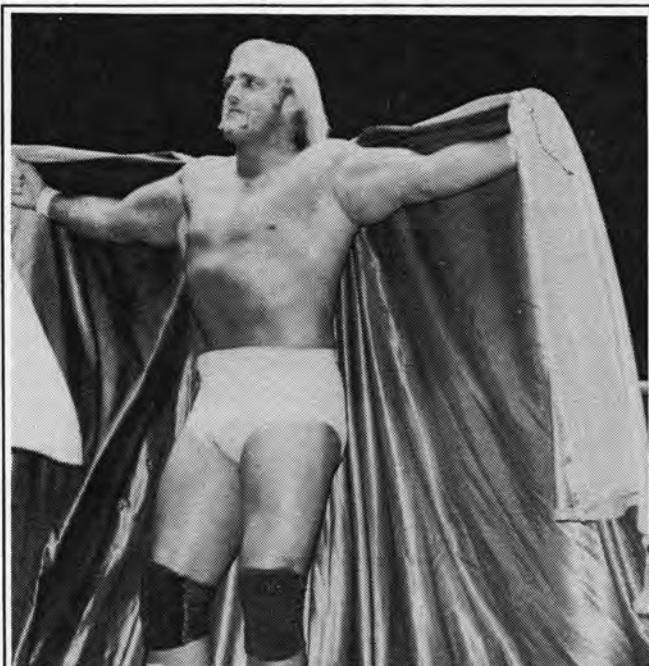
1990 PRO WRESTLING
DIRECTORY



*Ric Flair with Woman
Wrestler of the Year
Best Heel*



*Rick and Scott Steiner
Tag Team of the Year*



*Hulk Hogan
Best Baby Face
Most Charismatic*

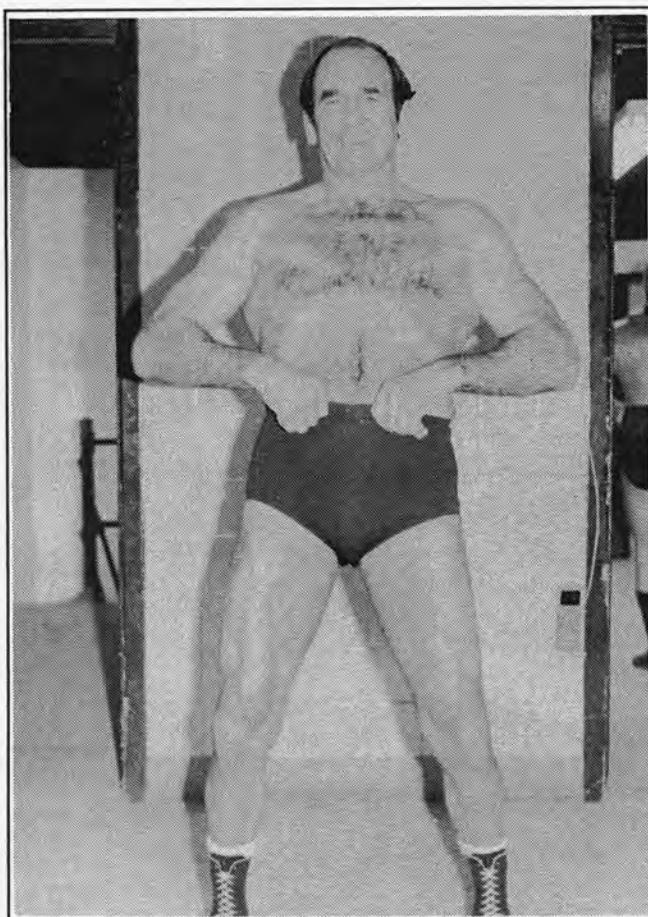
WRESTLERS OF THE PAST



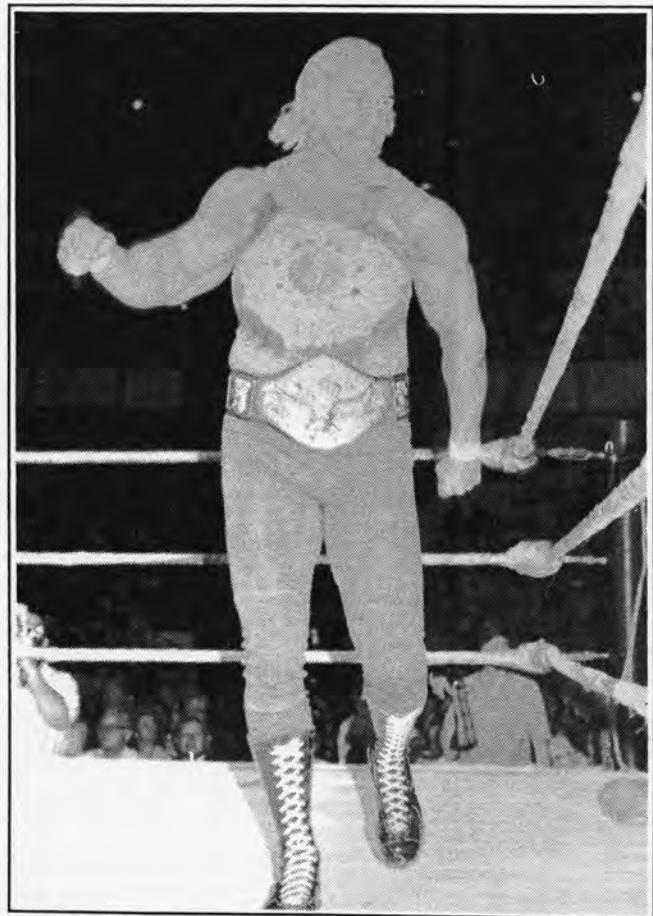
Ray Stevens, Nick Bockwinkel, Bobby Heenan



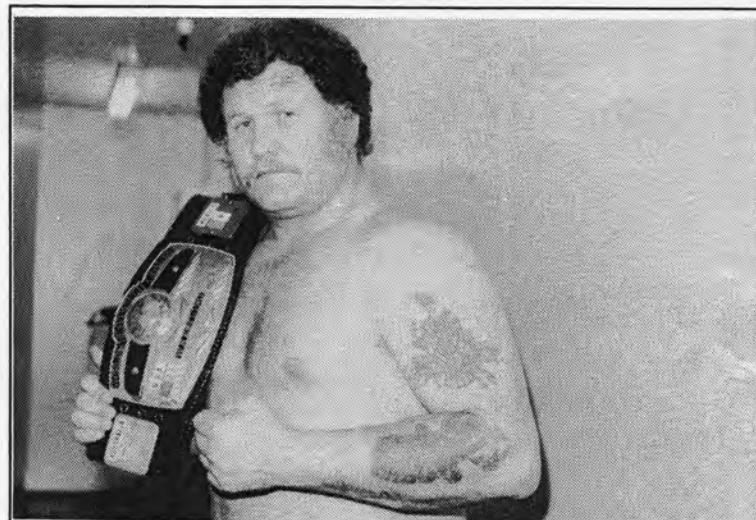
Bruno Sammartino



Lou Thesz



Billy Graham



Harley Race

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Printed by: Four Seasons Printing of Campbell, California
Production: Herb Meltzer
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TOP WRESTLING NEWS STORIES OF 1990

1990 is not going to go down in history as the greatest year for American professional wrestling.

In the United States, the business wound down to just four full-time promotions at years end, only one of which drew more than 10,000 fans to a card during the entire year.

And while the business is moving more and more to one based on pay-per-view, as opposed to live arena shows, as its economic base, the quality of those pay-per-view shows dropped during 1990.

What actually happened over the past year was two things. In 1989, Turner Broadcasting had just taken over the National Wrestling Alliance. While TBS as a whole never really got behind its wrestling company, those within the NWA started out enthusiastic about providing the fans with great shows, signing great wrestlers and putting on great television in order to becoming a competitor for the much-larger World Wrestling Federation. But during 1990, reality set in. The way the company was run would never allow it to be competitive with the WWF. The company from above wasn't willing to make the commitment to be competitive. And those with the desire to put together the best product became frustrated with the situation. More frustration evolved within the office and among the wrestlers at the constantly-changing direction. Morale dropped among the wrestlers as they went from arena to arena, as the crowds, small to begin with, dwindled down to embarrassing numbers. Television shows started having the look of being cranked out by an overworked crew. As a general rule, the quality of the arena shows dropped. As the year went on, the company direction seemed to be to develop new stars, which is good. But having wrestlers that inexperienced in what claims to be a major league promotion hurt the major league image. Wrestlers came and went. Angles were started with no idea where they would go. Often they didn't go anywhere, they just disappeared. The NWA, which spent 1990 in a name transition to where it now calls itself World Championship Wrestling, tarnished its image as a major league promotion, even though its top performers still make major league money. With no illusion in 1990 about being competitive with No. 1, settling for No. 2 was easy. It was its spot, by default. Jerry Jarrett's United States Wrestling Association had no interest in paying six-figure salaries or promoting nationally. They weren't even in the pay-per-view business.

No. 1, the World Wrestling Federation, suffered through its worst year when it came to live attendance since expanding nationally in 1984. The big dive took place after Wrestlemania, when the Ultimate Warrior defeated Hulk Hogan to win the WWF title before 64,287 fans at the Toronto Sky Dome. While WWF crowds have traditionally dropped after Wrestlemania, the drop was far more staggering than in past years. The company made the necessary changes in October, and crowds returned to healthy levels as the year came to a close, but one wonders how long the "mega-match" gimmick will mean something.

There was transition in the rest. Verne Gagne's American Wrestling Association was all but out of business by the end of the year. While the company still has an office and still has a few television stations, it lost its ESPN deal, and hadn't actually promoted a card in several months. Its champion, Larry Zbyszko, Gagne's son-in-law, finally took off in December to become a television announcer for WCW. For all practical purposes, the AWA wasn't even a wrestling promotion by years end. Jerry Jarrett, who had run the Tennessee-Kentucky territory since a '70s promotional war with Nick Gulas, had his United States Wrestling Association undergo a few changes. First, in August, the Dallas end of the promotion was given up after Kevin Von Erich filed legal papers charging Jarrett had misappropriated company funds. Von Erich and his brother Kerry, who had left the promotion a month earlier to join the WWF, were minority partners in the Dallas office, of which Jarrett controlled 60 percent, a controlling interest. Rather than fight the charges, Jarrett punted the football, figuring that since the company had just lost its prime television spot on KTVT in Dallas, Von Erich would start his drive inside his own five-yard line, so to speak. Jarrett turned out to be correct, because by November, Von Erich, averaging about 250 fans per week to the Dallas Sportatorium, was out of business, leaving Jarrett to start in the same building in the new year.

The only other promotion that survived 1990 running full-time in North America was Don Owen's Big-Time Wrestling in Oregon. But that promotion, which was a hot regional office in 1989 behind the ideas of booker Lynn Denton and phantom booker Roddy Piper, fell flat. The talent level dropped and it seemed the most colorful characters were phased out by Denton, whose shows without clean finishes stopped drawing. Many of the wrestlers had to take on day jobs. By the end of the year, the average spot show gate was down to \$800. While Owen will probably never fold his tent, it's a far cry from the thriving territory it once was.

But crowds aren't everything. One promotion sold out every show but two it promoted over the past three years. By the end of 1990, with an incredible television deal in the works (the company had signed a deal for \$277,000 in TV rights fees for each monthly card starting in the spring of 1991), the Universal Wrestling Federation folded after a front office fight between wrestlers and management. The wrestlers, with new management and under a new name, are expected to open a new promotion in the spring of 1991. But it does seem amazing that a group which set a pro wrestling record in November of 1989 by selling 40,000 tickets for more than \$2 million on the first day tickets went on sale (for a November 29 Tokyo Dome show which set what was then a pro wrestling live gate record of \$2.9 million) would be out of business one year later.

The popularity of the UWF paved the way for All and New Japan, promotions that had been rivals for nearly 20 years, to work together. Early in the year came word that Steve Williams, one of New Japan's stars, was going to work a tour for All Japan, and Williams wound up as

virtually a full-time wrestler for All Japan. In exchange, All Japan would sent New Japan wrestlers like Stan Hansen and Tiger Jeet Singh. At one point a dream match program between Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Tatsumi Fujinami was in the works, but Shohei Baba changed his mind because Mitsuhiro Misawa got over so big. And when Ric Flair pulled out of a February 10th Tokyo Dome card just three weeks before the show was to take place, New Japan asked All Japan for help in saving the card. They did more than just save the show, as the two promotions working on the same show, with a few "dream" inter-federation matches sold out the 63,900-seat Dome almost immediately after the announcement. A subsequent Tokyo Dome card, on April 13, had both groups along with the WWF combine, but by show time, New Japan had decided to go its own way and its wrestlers only worked with one another instead of against WWF and All Japan foes.

In business in a big way was Megame Super Opticals, a large corporation in Japan, whose president, Hachiro Tanaka, helped promote the UWF Tokyo Dome card and was a big wrestling fan. In the spring, word of this new promotion, with Tanaka financing it with \$30 to \$40 million, exploded in Japan when Genichiro Tenryu, one of the two most popular wrestlers in the country, left All Japan and became the leading star for the group which made its debut in September called "Super World Sports," or SWS.

Between the loss of Tenryu and a television time change from Sunday nights at 10:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., 1990 should have been a disaster for Shohei Baba's All Japan. Somehow, it didn't work out that way. "All Japan" became a battle cry for fans, who saw it as an underdog promotion. Baba's personal popularity became amazing. The crowd enthusiasm for the group's first big show without Tenryu, on June 8 at Tokyo's Budokan Hall (where its top star, Jumbo Tsuruta, put over Mitsuhiro Misawa, who had formerly wrestled as Tiger Mask, clean in the middle in 24 minutes), was untouched all year. From that point on, All Japan was "over" big in Tokyo. Fans liked the promotion. Fans liked everything, from mid-card comedy to high-intensity main events. After big shows, the fans who would pack the buildings in Tokyo would chant "All Japan, All Japan."

The other major office in Japan, Antonio Inoki's New Japan Pro Wrestling, had a down-and-up year. Spot show crowds early in the year fell to the point the promotion announced a limited number of shows, starting in April. While crowds in the major cities had stayed strong, it appeared the group had lost its "small-town" drawing power when Inoki himself retired and went into politics. This strategy of cutting down the number of shows and thus, having every live card mean something, worked to perfection. This was, although not to the same extreme, the same concept the UWF had used to sell out its houses. New Japan was reborn on April 27 in Tokyo with new young stars like Shinya Hashimoto, Keiji Muto, Jushin Riger and Masa Chono, and was a big success, culminating with a successful and spectacular

weeks-in-advance sellout on November 1 at Tokyo's Budokan Hall.

While in Japan, the big promotions were packing them in. Even an independent promotion formed by former All Japan wrestler Atsushi Onita, concentrating on wild brawling and heavy juice, gained a big enough following that it was packing Tokyo's Korakuen Hall with SRO crowds every month. It drew a phenomenal crowd of 7,532 in the Tokyo Gym on November 5 with tickets priced from \$25 to \$75 — quite a splash for an independent group. Onita made one mistake on the way, which nearly cost the company their entire business. Onita, who gained a great deal of popularity and had become one of the most charismatic wrestlers in Japan, decided to make an attempt to become the biggest hero in the country. To be the top baby face, you need the top heel. Enter Jose Gonzales, the man who was brought to trial for murder in the 1988 death of Japanese wrestling idol Bruiser Brody and later acquitted under dubious circumstances. Onita felt that bringing Gonzales in, and then destroying him, would make him stronger than even Akira Maeda. But the public reaction to the idea was so vehement, Onita dropped his idea — not before executing one of the most disgusting promotional angles ever, but before bringing Gonzales in — and soon fans forgave Onita for the idea.

The year of 1991 will be interesting to follow. Will the trend of falling crowds continue in the United States, or will the promoters find the answer to the problem? Will Joe Pedicino be able to pull off his plans, in which case U.S. wrestling should get quite interesting? Will Herb Abrams, who has become a major enemy of Vince McMahon, become a factor, or will he fade away? Will World Championship Wrestling find a winning formula? Will fans in Japan continue to support so many different promotions and so many different styles of wrestling? Can Akira Maeda start over once again with the same success as before?

More and more it seems the future of the business is the "big show" concept. In Japan, maybe even within the next ten years, PPV will be introduced, and it will result in big changes in the business there. In this country, as more and more homes get wired, this will be the future battle-ground. Even in 1990, with the NWA having a disastrous year at the houses, the amount of profit in one PPV show should make up for weeks and weeks of losses on the road. As the universe grows, so should revenue. A one percent buy rate when the universe hits 30 million homes, which is a few years down the line but not in the unforeseeable future either, at a \$20 list, would be a \$6 million show with the company gross on that being \$2.4 million. Put five shows like that on during a year and you should have enough money to make up for any amount of house show losses (and by that time one figures the number of house shows will be limited to those with profit potential to begin with).

Our impromptu editorial board selected the 10 biggest news stories of the past year, and these were the selections:

1. ULTIMATE WARRIOR BEATS HULK HOGAN FOR WWF TITLE AT WRESTLEMANIA VI

Ever since the World Wrestling Federation expanded nationally, the undisputed "star" of the promotion has been Hulk Hogan. While others have had prominent roles, nobody was ever groomed to replace him, or allowed to even be his rival in the spotlight.

But Hogan was getting older. He was making retirement noises, although those close to him never took them seriously. And more importantly, he was getting more and more Hollywood offers which would take him away from wrestling for an extended period of time.

It was clearly time to start grooming the successor. And the choice for successor was Jim Hellwig, the Ultimate Warrior. WWF promoter Vince McMahon had educated the public that the biggest, most muscular individual is the best. And in Hellwig, he had a man with a better physique than Hogan, more muscular, younger and loaded with charisma. But he was not even Hogan's equal in the ring, and Hogan was only marginal, and Warrior was a poor interview, even when the interviews were scripted out for him.

Unlike in the past in the WWF, where the promotion gets an interim villain (Ivan Koloff, Stan Stasiak, Superstar Billy Graham and Iron Sheik) for the transition between face champion dynasties, there was no interim. There was only going to be Wrestlemania, where the two most powerful forces in the universe would meet. The angle was shot in January, where in a tag match, a misunderstanding led to blows. This was the same situation that Vince's father did in promoting a 1972 match between Pedro Morales and Bruno Sammartino at Shea Stadium. Neither would turn heel, just like Bruno and Pedro. And ironically, when the dust settled, McMahon himself compared the financial results, impressive on the surface but quite disappointing nonetheless to Bruno and Morales, telling those close to him that in 1990 he learned the same lesson than his father learned in 1972 about promoting a match between superhero baby faces.

While Wrestlemania VI was not the biggest money making event in pro wrestling history, it may have been the WWF's finest hour. While the undercard was lackluster, it didn't matter. Titan shows are built on the main event. On paper, this didn't promise to be a good match. Both were faces, so they'd have to work a baby face match. Hogan had no experience at this, and he was only a marginal patterned worker. It was believed to add

credibility to the title switch, the match would have to go longer than the normal Hogan eight-minute routine, plus he couldn't do the normal routine because it would kill off Warrior. Warrior wasn't even at Hogan's level when it came to wrestling, and his lack of stamina could have been a disaster in a 20 minute match if the pacing was hot.

It was probably Hogan's best performance ever. He sold missed moves by Warrior. He slowed down the pace when Warrior was blowing up. He varied his "superhero" routine to make Warrior an equal. The match was one of the most exciting of the year. It went more than 22 minutes. And while the match actually only contained nine minutes of actual action, between the stalling and rest holds, the drama was such that they were able to get away with it.

Wrestlemania drew 64,287 fans to the Sky Dome in Toronto, for a live gate of \$3.4 million in U.S. currency. The latter was a North American pro wrestling record, more than doubling the previous record of \$1,628,000 set at the previous Wrestlemania in Atlantic City with Hogan vs. Randy Savage. The crowd was the third largest paid ever in North America, trailing the 1987 Hogan vs. Andre the Giant match at Wrestlemania at the Pontiac Silverdome and a 1986 match in Toronto between Hogan and Paul Orndorff.

But the show was primarily geared toward pay-per-view. There, it was a disappointment. Previous Wrestlemanias had

done anywhere from a six percent buy rate on PPV (the previous two years) up to a ten percent buy rate for Hogan and Andre in 1987. Hogan and Warrior did approximately a 3.8 percent buy rate. Some blamed the increase in PPV price, up from \$24.95 in 1989 to \$29.95 in 1990. Late buys were priced in some cities as high as \$39.95. But McMahon obviously didn't feel that was the problem, as 1991's Wrestlemania has the same pricing structure as 1990.

Overall, this year's version of Wrestlemania grossed an estimated \$19 million (\$3.4 million live, \$15 million PPV and \$600,000 closed-circuit — the CC figure was down 80 percent from the previous year and a whopping 88 percent from Wrestlemania III), which would make it the second largest grossing pro wrestling event ever (trailing the estimated \$20.9 million of the Hogan-Savage Wrestlemania V). However, since such a large part of the income came from PPV, as opposed to



Hulk Hogan

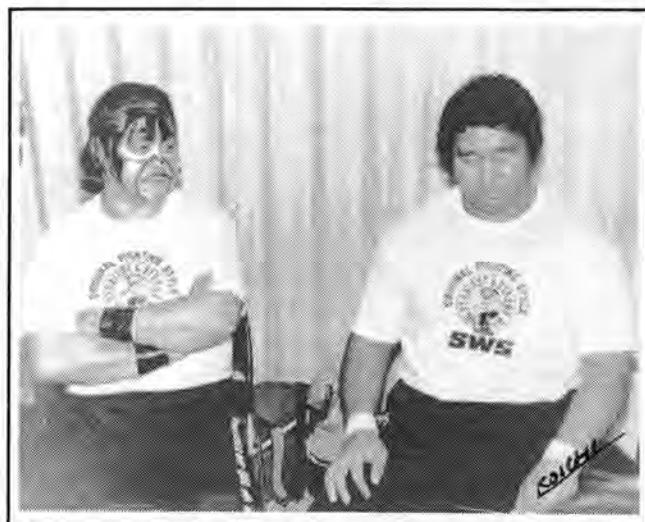
closed-circuit where the profit margin is higher (the company generally receives about 40 percent of the PPV revenue, after the cable company and the PPV syndicators take their cut, and somehow that final number usually winds up being significantly less than expected when you are the third ones in line to touch the money and count the figures), even with the big live gate (subject to heavy Canadian government taxes to the point Titan vowed never to do another big show in Canada once this one was over) the actual profit margin may have been the smallest since Wrestlemania II.

As champion, Warrior was a disappointment. Perhaps it was because he didn't have strong foes lined up for him, although in 1988, Randy Savage packed houses with Ted DiBiase after Wrestlemania IV, and DiBiase had already

done jobs for Hulk Hogan in the major markets. Perhaps whatever boost he might have gotten from beating Hogan was negated because once the show was over, the promotion hardly mentioned that fact and instead emphasized Hogan even more. Perhaps fans resented him for beating Hogan. Perhaps, once in the real spotlight, his weaknesses became more apparent. Perhaps the wrestling business was just burned out and he was simply the scapegoat, as nothing else in wrestling was drawing, either. Whatever, Titan tried to change his image, change the way he looked, seemingly on a monthly basis trying to find the correct formula. There is little doubt that when Warrior was given the title in April, this was expected to be a dynasty and a long-term thing. The odds against a long-term dynasty have grown since that time.

2. SWS FORMED - GENICHIRO TENRYU LEAVES ALL JAPAN

There is an economic fact of life. Whenever a business appears to be prospering, people can't wait to get involved with it.



Great Kabuki and Genichiro Tenryu

Such is pro wrestling. After Wrestlemania III, which drew 90,817 in Pontiac, MI, independent promoters and wanna-be promoters exploded onto the scene. In Japan, after the success of the recent Tokyo Dome shows, the situation was similar.

Enter Hachiro Tanaka. Tanaka, the president of Megane Super Opticals, the second largest eye-glass company in Japan, has been a wrestling fan from way back. His company helped promote and sponsor the Universal Wrestling Federation show on November 29, 1989 at the Tokyo Dome which drew 60,000 fans and \$2.9 million. After a success like that, one can hardly question why he wanted to get into the wrestling business.

So he went to buy the flourishing UWF. Since the company was run in-house at the time, and was successful, those in charge didn't want to sell or see the need for advice or interference from outsiders. So Tanaka decided to form his own company.

Well, besides Akira Maeda, the biggest wrestler star in Japan at the time was Genichiro Tenryu. So Tanaka went to Tenryu with a deal he couldn't turn down. Tenryu, who had just turned 40, was offered 500 million yen (more than \$3 million U.S. at the time, but with the rising yen, closer to \$4 million now) on a five-year deal. At the age of 40, money like that was too much for Tenryu to turn down. With money like that to spend, Tanaka expected to be able to cherry-pick the biggest stars from the UWF, All Japan and New Japan. And it still may happen.

Tenryu jumped in May, as did George Takano and Naoki Sano from New Japan, both talented mid-card wrestlers who were somewhat lost in the shuffle since New Japan was overloaded with hot talent. Soon after, All Japan was raided, and raided good, from Yoshiaki Yatsu, Great Kabuki, Shunji Takano, Shinichi Nakano, Tatsumi Kitahara, Goro Tsurumi, Samson Fuyuki, Masao Orihara and Isao Takagi. Along with them came a few front office employees.

All Japan survived those losses better than expected at the time, and in fact the company actually flourished. SWS was blocked as far as getting big-name foreign talent, despite its big budget. But it made its debut in late September, and promoted two big shows in Yokohama on October 18 and 19. Megane Super's television production was second-to-none and their entire "show" put even the UWF aspects of making a wrestling show a complete show to shame. However they've yet to find their niche in the wrestling world. The first two nights in Yokohama drew about 11,000 apiece, but more than half were freebies.

What makes SWS even more interesting is toward the end of the year, SWS signed a talent exchange deal with the World Wrestling Federation after both All Japan and New Japan decided not to pursue working with the WWF. In December, the first crew was sent and Titan will be sending a half-dozen wrestlers monthly to Japan and the two groups will promote a major show at the Tokyo Dome on March 30, 1991.

3. U.S. ARENA BUSINESS COLLAPSES

The main reason the 1990 wrestling year will not be looked upon as a great one was the collapse of the arena business.

This was a phenomenon that affected every wrestling promotion in the country. For whatever reason you'd like to attribute it to, wrestling crowds fell during the traditionally weak summer months, but didn't rebound in the fall.

As an example of how bad things truly were, the Thanksgiving weekend show in Greensboro, a traditional sellout, drew just 700 fans. Crowds of less than 1,000 for the major offices were not unusual. In fact, with the exception of the WWF and WCW, it was rare to see more than 1,000 fans paying to attend wrestling anywhere in North America.

Since Wrestlemania, the WWF has drawn precious few full houses, and at some of its full-blown heavily pushed and papered TV tapings, the buildings were less than half filled. The NWA's problems were more alarming. Rumors continued to fly that at some point, the group would scale back or even curtail house shows. But the group was actually running a full schedule through the end of the year.

What were the reasons? Certainly the talent at the top was stale. The regional offices had been slowly dying off since 1984 anyway, and the few remaining ones couldn't compete with the larger groups with the big stars that were appearing on television. Television overexposure, which some felt would kill the business, actually had somewhat quelled as far fewer hours of television were available in most markets than just a few years ago. However, with fewer promotions, the big two offices were still overexposed.

Pay-per-view was certainly a factor as well. The public, particularly the NWA fans who were the hardest core and paid attention more to trends, more-and-more came to the realization that the pay-per-view show is where it's at and that nothing of significance would occur on a house show. Indeed, the NWA hardly pushed house shows, concentrating most of its hype on the quarterly Clash specials on TBS and the pay-per-views. The WWF began hyping one PPV show almost immediately

upon the completion of the previous one. And unlike in years past when the WWF would be running different angles and programs for the houses, this year, such as at Wrestlemania, most of the matches were duplicates of what was occurring at the house shows. However if PPV was the main reason business was down, please explain Canada. There is no PPV in Canada, yet crowds dropped every bit as drastically there as in the United States. Canada proved that while PPV may have caused some decline in house shows, it was not the major factor.

The major factor could be economic. While wrestling in the past has flourished during poor economic times, its audience and lure have changed and the world has changed. Some, like Vince McMahon, blamed the economy as a key point.

But most seemed to feel it was simply that the scene wasn't very interesting. The NWA lacked direction. The WWF lacked matches that people wanted to see. Wrestling had developed few new stars, and none of the new stars were the all-around performers of those they were replacing. Faced with a choice of stale stars and stars who really weren't, lots of people decided to pass.

Crowds dropped in the WWF to nearly a panic level when McMahon dropped the "C" team in October, which meant dropping nearly 20 wrestlers. As it turned out, for a variety of reasons, only a handful of the wrestlers originally on the hit list were actually done away with, and most of them were prelim wrestlers. Between reaching a trade agreement with SWS in Japan, which gave them reason to keep more wrestlers around, and wanting to keep established names away from promoters trying to get into the game, the roster pretty much stayed as it was.

But the dropping of the "C" show was the right move at the right time. Loading up the two remaining shows and billing them as the Night of the Mega-Matches did increase crowds during the traditionally strong fall season. While crowds were nowhere near the level of previous years, they were up.

Those within wrestling figured loading the shows would bring short-term relief to attendance woes. The real question is yet to be answered, and that is long-term.

4. WWF, NEW JAPAN AND ALL JAPAN COMBINE FOR ONE SHOW

Going on two decades, New Japan and All Japan Pro Wrestling had been bitter promotional enemies. While the "war" between the sides has had its peaks and valleys, only once did the two groups attempt to run a combined show. That was back in 1979.

Since that time there were several periods, particularly in the early '80s where the groups were bitter enemies. In recent years the hostilities had subsided, and this year they even agreed to exchange talent.

The gimmick of All Japan and New Japan working together for a combined show on February 10 at the

Tokyo Dome was a major success, setting a Japanese attendance record for wrestling.

At the same time, the WWF decided it wanted to get into the Japanese scene. Since it expanded nationally in 1984, the WWF had never combined with another promotion to produce a wrestling show. Since New Japan broke off its talent exchange deal with the WWF in 1985, WWF had almost never allowed its talent to work for other promotions.

But after the success that New Japan had in April of 1989 at the Tokyo Dome (drawing 53,800 fans) and the

UWF had in November of that year (drawing 60,000), and with Japanese fans used to paying higher prices for tickets, the WWF decided it was time to make a play.

The WWF combined with both All Japan and New Japan to promote the card, scheduled for April 13. Naturally there were plenty of compromises to be made. The WWF didn't care about any of its talent putting people over other than Hulk Hogan and Ultimate Warrior, who had to be put in a "win" position on the card. In the case of Warrior, the WWF solved its own problem by booking him with one of its wrestlers, Ted DiBiase, because it was felt Warrior would need one of the best workers around to be able to get over in Japan. With Hogan, it was his match that would be the one to sell the tickets. Shohei Baba suggested that the biggest money match possible would be Hogan against either Jumbo Tsuruta or Genichiro Tenryu. However, WWF didn't want Hogan matched with a Japanese wrestler and there was some question as to whether they would put Hogan over clean and decisively. The compromise was reached for it to be Terry Gordy that Hogan would work with in the main event, but that match fell through just days before the event.

A line-up was announced, but a month before the show, New Japan pulled out. Those in power, presumably Riki Choshu, didn't want to even be in the same ring with the "Titan showmen." There were also problems with TV contracts. The New Japan wrestlers were under contract to TV-Asahi and thus, wouldn't be able to appear on the television special. The "mixed" matches involving New Japan vs. Titan wrestlers were changed. New Japan would have two matches involving its wrestlers on the card, but they would work with one another. In this way, New Japan wanted to have its wrestlers steal the spotlight by working the best matches on the show. And they nearly succeeded in that.

By showtime, more problems had crept up, mainly between the Titan forces and All Japan promoter Baba. Gordy had pulled out of the main event and Baba suggested Stan Hansen to take his place. WWF officials were wary of the change, but eventually accepted, but word didn't leak out of the change until the night before. There were other problems, ranging from the position of the ring on the baseball diamond down to whether the ring announcer would give five minute calls during the matches as is tradition in Japan.

But the show itself was considered a success. A crowd of 53,742 fans (41,000 paid) attended with the live gate at \$2.1 million. There were thousands of Americans, mainly servicemen stationed abroad, at the matches, and it was believed to be the largest American contingent ever at a Japanese entertainment or sporting event. In contrast, at a sold out Budokan Hall show, it's doubtful you could count two dozen Americans. A few days later, when the card appeared on Nippon television as a 90-minute prime time special, the show drew a 14.1 rating and a 32 share — the second largest TV rating of the year for wrestling.

Hogan, in the main event, pinned Hansen in an atypical Hogan match. Both men had worked hard in putting together a wrestling match, and while Hogan looked rusty as far as actually wrestling, it was a good match that satisfied everyone. The crowd, however, was about 60 percent pro-Hansen even though the thousands of Americans at the show cheered Hogan wildly.

The two New Japan matches (Jushin Riger vs. Akira Nogami and Riki Choshu & Masa Chono vs. Shinya Hashimoto & Masa Saito) would have stolen the show except for Hogan's match and the match that did steal the show, Genichiro Tenryu pinning Randy Savage. Fans got into the gimmick of Giant Baba & Andre the Giant as a tag team, although a most pathetic tag team at that. The Giants defeated newly-crowned WWF tag champs Demolition in technically the worst match on the show, but enjoyed by most in the crowd. But not the American servicemen who were cringing as the rowdy and rugged-looking Demolition sold like crazy for Baba. While not as bad of a match as the Giants, Warrior and DiBiase flopped. Warrior got a huge reaction coming to the ring, but about 90 seconds into the match, it seemed everyone smartened up at once and they started mocking both men as if it were strictly a prelim comedy match. The biggest difference between the crowds was apparent during a match between Jake Roberts and Big Bossman. The Americans in the crowd were chanting for Jake to put the snake on Bossman throughout, particularly after he won the match with a DDT. The Japanese couldn't understand why fans would want to see Bossman, who worked hard to make it a decent match, humiliated in that manner and it caused some "ugly American" thoughts. Indeed, with the exception of Hogan and Savage, the only other Titan wrestler who really got over at the show was Tito Santana, in a preliminary tag team match.

5. UWF FOLDS

The idea would have been thought of as unbelievable just a few short months ago. The Universal Wrestling Federation folding.

But in December, that was the case, just one year after drawing 60,000 fans to the Tokyo Dome, the UWF was a large footnote in the wrestling history books, done away with by a management/wrestler problem.

The problem was the relationship between Akira Maeda, the group's biggest star, and Shinji Jin, its president and promoter. The catalyst of the problem came from the formation of the SWS. Jin felt he owed Hachiro Tanaka, the founder of SWS, a favor since Megane Super had helped promote the Tokyo Dome show. And also, he

saw tons of business in a Tokyo Dome match for early 1991 with Maeda facing Genichiro Tenryu. But there was one obstacle. Maeda, Maeda believed, and rightfully so, that the Japanese public wouldn't accept the idea of a UWF wrestler, particularly himself, all of a sudden doing moves that obviously require cooperation or high spots that don't make sense within the framework of legitimate looking wrestling.

Even after Maeda made it be known that the match wasn't going to take place, Jin wanted to loan Masaharu Funaki, who he was grooming to be the top star in the promotion, and some others to SWS for a few shows. Maeda was against that plan as well, believing the UWF

wrestlers should only work that style since they were the one promotion that the general public believed to be legitimate. It's that legitimacy that was their gimmick, and without it, he thought it would kill their image and their business.

Maeda and Jin clashed over this disagreement. And there was also the problem of trying to remove Maeda from the top of the promotion and replacing him with Funaki. Indeed, Funaki's matches with Nobuhiko Takada and Yoshiaki Fujiwara drew huge houses on the road to the Maeda match.

Maeda tried to remove Jin from power originally, but found that the company papers had been written to give Jin a lot of control. Maeda and Jin had actually been together from the start, as Jin worked in the New Japan office and was friends with Maeda since both's early days in the wrestling business. Maeda basically put Jin in charge of the business. Maeda didn't even bother to read the original company papers designating control because he and Jin were so close. The Maeda-Funaki match in Osaka, drawing a sellout 15,000 fans, was the last "glory" show of the UWF. Maeda won the match via submission, so he kept his spot to the end. But Jin suspended him shortly afterward, ostensibly because Maeda wanted to force Jin out of power, claiming misappropriation of funds. Indeed, Jin seemed, between his million dollar home and fancy cars, to be living higher than any of the wrestlers.

A few days after the suspension, Maeda was scheduled to give a speech at a college in Tokyo. Jin canceled the speech, but Maeda showed up anyway, as did a curious crowd of something like 10,000 people. Maeda told about the promotional problems and basically came across as the total baby face in this now very public scandal. With Jin as the heel, Maeda had managed to preserve his image that a public scandal could have tarnished.

Maeda had always had the support of Takada and Kazuo Yamazaki, who had been with him since the start. But some of the other wrestlers were thought to have been favoring Jin. But a few days before the UWF's next show in Kumamoto on Dec. 1, Maeda had a meeting with all the UWF wrestlers. In dramatic fashion, the wrestlers statement came after the main event of the show.

Jin already knew. He didn't even show up for the card. After Funaki won his main event match beating Ken Shamrock, he called Maeda into the ring. The show sold out the 4,500 seat building mainly because it was well known that Maeda would be there. When Maeda came to the ring, he and Funaki shook hands. Then every wrestler on the undercard came to the ring and they stood around, in a circle, and shook each others hands.

A few days later, Jin announced he had fired every wrestler, in essence, folding the promotion. Maeda and the rest of the wrestlers are putting together a new company, probably with another name, and hope to begin promoting in March or April of 1991.

6. STING WINS NWA TITLE

As 1989 came to a close, the powers-that-be in charge of the National Wrestling Alliance decided to take stock of the situation.

Business wasn't profitable. And with Jim Herd in charge, that meant changes were to be made. One of those changes was a change at the top. It would be time for a new world champion.

While this issue divided and polarized a lot of people, we also have to look at reality. Nobody suggested that Ric Flair wasn't the best wrestler in

WCW. And if all things were equal, he did have more traits to be world champion than any other wrestler. But the reality was, Flair was 40. More importantly, he'd been champion for most of the past eight years. There was a valid argument to the idea that even though Flair was the best man for the title, than it was simply time for a change to something new because eight years is a long time at the top. There was also a valid argument that the company needed to

build for the future, and at Flair's age, maybe it was time to make the move.

At the same time, there were other problems. Nobody, apparently including Flair, opposed the idea of making someone the new champion. The booking committee at the time, of which Flair was the head, had the idea that



Sting



Sting vs. Flair

Flair should lose the title, but eventually regain it. There were some in charge who point-blank felt that having Flair on top was why the house shows weren't drawing, and wanted to change him, move him down, but certainly never give him back the strap. The conventional wisdom, of course, was to do the title change, evaluate the new champion, and keep Flair strong. If the new champ works out, there is no need to go back to Flair except possibly as a short-term thing to stimulate rematch gates. If the new champ doesn't work out, Flair is in a strong position and if nothing else, he's reliable to give you that classic title match and was a proven draw at least when the right scenario cropped up.

Originally the idea was to make Lex Luger the champion. At the end of 1989, it was basically a foregone conclusion that the heel Lex Luger would take the title at the pay-per-view show on Feb. 25 in Greensboro. Well, the idea changed to Sting, much to Luger's frustration. But during the build-up for the match, on Feb. 6 in San Antonio, the night Flair and the Andersons turned heel on Sting, when trying to climb into a cage to get at Flair during the live Clash special, Sting's knee went out. And it was serious enough that he needed major reconstructive surgery. The doctors said six months minimum before Sting could return. It could be one year. And there was no guarantee he'd be 100 percent when he came back.

But Sting did make a remarkable recovery. He was ready to return in time for the July 8 pay-per-view show from Baltimore. The reaction was thunderous when Sting captured the title amidst a fireworks-laden celebration. Sting made a speech afterwards, giving Flair tons of credit for being the greatest champion of all-time and saying that he would have big shoes to fill. For that moment, he had won over his critics and had thrilled his supporters to no end.

Unfortunately, that moment was the peak of Sting's championship reign.



Flair

It's hard to really describe what went wrong from here. Everything seemed fine for the first month. While Sting's subsequent rematches with Flair didn't exactly knock the box office on fire, the business was respectable given the depths it had fallen to. Then came Clash XII, which is where the bloom started falling off the rose. Sting was put in a brilliantly-conceived feud against a mysterious menace known as The Black Scorpion. A title vs. mask match was set up for the Clash. Was the original idea a success? Yes. The television audience to watch the Clash was the largest in NWA history. In fact, the actual viewership for the final two matches (Sting vs. Scorpion and Flair vs. Luger) set wrestling cable television records, breaking the mark set in November of 1989 for a Flair vs. Terry Funk "I Quit match."

However, a title vs. mask match constitutes a blow-off. The problems started here. Fans were promised a title change or an unmasking. They received neither. Ric Flair was simply phenomenal in his match with Lex Luger, which started people questioning whether Flair, or even Luger, should be the rightful champion. Sting, who once he got away from working with Flair, people started picking up on the fact his knee wasn't what it once was, had to follow. He and Al Perez, who wrestled as the Scorpion, didn't have a good match. While he won, there was no unmasking. The Scorpion angle was kept going, but it didn't have the interest to draw paying customers. While Sting and Sid Vicious did sellout Chicago for their pay-per-view match on Oct. 27, by this time Sting's heat had levelled off and Vicious (who had incredible charisma but little ability) was cheered more during the match. On two big shows in succession Sting's match couldn't climax the show or overshadow its preceding matches. Sting and Vicious had a creative angle for the finish, but not one which led to ticket buying for rematches. Crowds were dwindling. And just like with Flair one year earlier, when crowds dwindle, the man at the top, like the quarterback of a football team, probably takes way too much blame, just as he gets too much credit when things are going well.

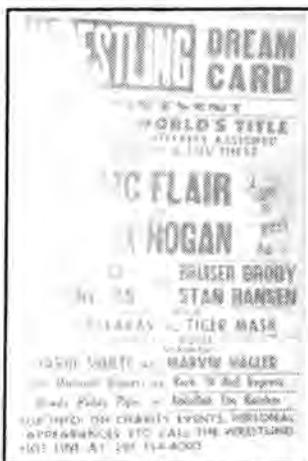


Sting

7. RIC FLAIR TRIES TO GET OUT OF CONTRACT

This was more of a behind-the-scenes story.

As part of his deal to drop the championship, Flair wanted to either negotiate in the power that he would be able to break his three-year contract with the NWA or get an extension on his contract, which was to expire late in 1991. The lucrative deal, which according to reliable sources, was worth \$750,000 per year.



Wrestling Dream Card

When the NWA wanted Flair to drop the championship to Lex Luger in late March, Flair refused, apparently because of a clause in his contract giving him that power. Supposedly what Flair wanted was simply either a contract extension, or the right to break his contract and go to the WWF, and he'd drop the title. Jim Herd wasn't willing to be put in the position of on March 25, 1991, if Wrestlemania drew 100,000 fans and set a pay-per-view record, of being labeled as the "dunce" who made it all possible.

Leading up to the July 8 PPV show, the plot thickened. The idea of Flair vs. Hogan, the dream match that will probably never take place, started sounding

more and more inviting. Indeed, behind-the-scenes, those at Titan were already crowing about the match and the records it would set. Angles had been speculated upon behind-the-scenes. There were those who speculated that because the "best" angle to promote the match couldn't be used (because it would acknowledge Flair's career history with another promotion), that the match wouldn't be able to set records. However the talk was long and loud that Flair would come in and the "dream match" would headline, and Hogan was said to be pushing for it as much as anyone (and why not? He'd more likely than not have the best match of his career and the result was guaranteed).

While it is doubtful Flair could have earned anywhere near his contract guarantee had he gone to Titan, there is also no doubt Flair would have achieved a measure of publicity and general public recognition being primed for a Wrestlemania match that he would never achieve with the NWA. Another factor is that Flair's contract guarantees pay in the event of an injury. While WWF policy is not to have its wrestlers starve while they are injured, at the same time, the company offers no guaranteed contracts (except presumably for Hogan) and an injured wrestler isn't about to pull in \$15,000 weekly paychecks.

But when the dust cleared, this was the end of the story. Jim Herd refused to let Flair out of his contract. It may have been a controversial decision. It may have been to spite Vince McMahon. Some would question paying Flair so much money when the company seemed to want to phase him to the middle as the year drew on. But on March 25, 1991, no matter what Titan does at Wrestlemania, nobody will be able to mockingly give Jim Herd credit for setting a pro wrestling record gate for the opposition.

8. ALL JAPAN AND NEW JAPAN AGREE TO EXCHANGE TALENT

Coming on the heels of the Universal Wrestling Federation drawing 60,000 fans to the Tokyo Dome, All Japan and New Japan, for years the two dominant rival companies in Japan began to re-assess the situation.

All Japan had finished a strong year at the gate. New Japan wasn't quite as strong. But the rivalry had been for a long time a personal one between Antonio Inoki and Giant Baba. But with Inoki so heavily involved with politics, Seiji Sakaguchi's role with New Japan became larger. Baba and Sakaguchi had always gotten along.

So in December of 1989, the two sides surprised everyone and agreed to a limited talent exchange. The biggest beneficiary was Steve Williams, for years a major name with New Japan, who may have set a record for most

weeks working in Japan for a foreign import. Williams, teaming with Terry Gordy, worked 21 weeks for All Japan, and still worked several more weeks with New Japan. Actually the exchanges turned out to be limited. Stan Hansen worked a few dates for New Japan. So did Tiger Jeet Singh. Bam Bam Bigelow worked a week for All Japan. Andre the Giant worked the tag team tournament for All Japan. The two groups worked together on two Tokyo Dome shows. But as the year went on, with the exception of Williams going back-and-forth (and Williams wasn't given a big push in New Japan rings toward the end of the year because he was so established by that time as an All Japan star), there really wasn't much else to the story. But just that it happened was surprising and major.

9. ALL JAPAN AND NEW JAPAN COMBINE TO DRAW 63,900 TO TOKYO DOME

This gate can be attributed in a large way to Ric Flair. Why? After all, he wasn't even on the card.

Originally, New Japan booked the Tokyo Dome for February 10 and came forth with the idea of putting four different world champions to defend their respective belts on the card. They wanted Big Van Vader (IWGP), Hulk Hogan (WWF), Flair (NWA) and Larry Zbyszko (AWA) to appear to make this a first card ever of its kind. Well, even with a reported \$200,000 offer for one match, the WWF turned down the idea of Hogan appearing on a card since it would put him in a situation they wouldn't have complete control over.

But the card was made, with Vader defending against Riki Choshu, Zbyszko defending against Tatsumi Fujinami and Flair against Keiji Muto. Zbyszko was, in fact, to lose his title to Fujinami. Former sumo wrestling Grand champion Koji Kitao was to make his pro debut against Bam Bam Bigelow. Jushin Riger would defend his junior heavyweight title against Yoshihiro Asai. But a few weeks before the card was to take place, the Fujinami match fell through, since his injured back wasn't recovered enough. Masa Saito was announced as the sub. Asai had been forced to pull out even before that, as El Gran Hamada was going to start a Lucha Libre promotion in Japan and was to use Asai as its top star. Asai was basically told if he worked for New Japan, hence becoming a New Japan wrestler and thus be unavailable to work on the Lucha Libre tours, that he would have no more work in Mexico, where he now lived. Then, Flair pulled out. The NWA higher-ups decided that since Flair was booker at the time, he could go to Japan, but if he did, they were going to withhold

one week's pay since he would be spending the week working in Japan. Since Flair's one-week pay wasn't much less than he was going to be getting for working the Dome, coupled with his being booker, he canceled the Dome. With no opponent, Muto canceled as well.

Well, ringside tickets for this show were priced at \$350, and all were already sold out. And there was no Ric Flair. Sakaguchi met with Baba, who agreed to help New Japan out with this predicament.

What was arranged was the first card in 11 years in Japan where All Japan and New Japan wrestlers wrestled one another. Vader would now defend his title against Stan Hansen, a literal dream match between each group's biggest foreign drawing card. Choshu would team with George Takano against Genichiro Tenryu and Toshiaki Kawada (later Kawada was replaced by Tiger Mask as Tenryu's partner) and Osamu Kido and Kengo Kimura would face Jumbo Tsuruta and Yoshiaki Yatsu.

The idea of the groups working against one another piqued so much fan interest that within three days, all the remaining Tokyo Dome tickets were sold out. There was so much general public interest that the card, when it aired a few days later in prime time, drew a 23.2 rating — the largest pro wrestling television rating in Japan since Hiroshi Wajima's pro debut.

The card itself was a good one, with the highlight being the bout where Choshu and Tenryu would oppose one another to rekindle their 1985-87 feud in All Japan rings. Vader and Hansen turned into a brutal, stiff match which had the crowd on the borderline. Antonio Inoki came out of retirement and teamed with Sakaguchi to beat Masa Chono & Shinya Hashimoto in another top match.

10. OLE ANDERSON NAMED NWA BOOKER

After Ric Flair resigned as NWA booker in February, the company went along for three months mainly spinning its wheels. A committee was formed, but nobody put in charge. Finally, in May, it was time to name a booker.

While many names were talked about as potential candidates, the favorite seemed to be Bill Watts. However Watts took himself out of the picture after a meeting with Jack Petrik, in which he insisted on autonomous control, something the company wasn't ready to allow its booker to have.

For the previous year, Alan Rogowski, better known as Ole Anderson, had been both in and out of the booking committee. While not even mentioned as a candidate until the day he was picked for the spot, Anderson had complained about the way the company was going about its business loudly. For Anderson, he felt the wrestling business should be as it was in 1974, when most of the Southern States were doing booming business.

Unfortunately, it isn't 1974. And while Anderson's speech in the dressing room upon getting the job that the

same things that draw money in 1974 will draw money in 1990 brought some enthusiasm to his corner, the enthusiasm was short-lived. The wrestling world had changed, and in hindsight, Anderson would be the first to admit it. Anderson broke into wrestling in the mid-'60s, and achieved prominence in the 70s in the Carolinas and later in Georgia as one of the all-time great heels. His drawing power was simple. He was simply put, a bully. A bully who did great interviews, and who the fans wanted to see their favorite baby face shut up. But the simple colorless gimmickless bully is hard to get over in the era of special effects.

Anderson's first move as booker was to try and re-create his own success, make his heels bullies. In this case, racist bullies. Since the NWA's major city was in Atlanta, a city with a heavy black population. Anderson's heyday was during a period when he himself used race baiting to draw money against some black wrestlers who had little going for them but skin color. His first major feud involved bringing in the Junkyard Dog, some 70 pounds overweight, to feud with Ric Flair. This idea

was doomed before it even started as the NWA tried the same program the previous year, with a similar lack of success. But Anderson wasn't around then, and truthfully, the race issue wasn't pushed during the brief Flair-JYD program of the previous year. In the long run, all this program accomplished was taking the house gates, low to begin with, down another notch. Ironically, television ratings during this period stayed steady. However, losing numerous non-title and DQ verdicts to Dog did wonders for Flair as a champion, who had little steam left when he headed to the ring to drop the title to Sting in July.

Anderson's early reign did focus major heat on a feud. But either the issue itself was passe, or the fans simply didn't want to pay to see its conclusion. Whatever, Anderson wasn't able to bring up the house gates. Then again, on a consistent basis, nobody had for several years. But as time went on, the booking lacked focus. The entire Black Scorpion scenario summed things up best. A creative angle, not thought through, which ended

up being nothing but a mass of contradictions, ending with an unsatisfactory conclusion. While Anderson's pay-per-view shows from Baltimore and Chicago were critical successes, and one of his Clashes drew the largest audience to ever watch an NWA broadcast, things started falling apart on both sides after Chicago. Certainly, the November 20 Clash from Jacksonville was one of the worst "big shows" in recent memory. Surprisingly Anderson, from the so-called old school, phased out some of his better workers, such as the Midnight Express, Tom Zenk and Brian Pillman, and phased in the big green monsters one-after-another so they all basically looked the same and none got over.

The decision to drop Anderson was no doubt made before the November Clash, as those close to Anderson were already giving word that the time was near. When a "secret" deal with Dusty Rhodes was reached, Anderson's six-month run was over. Over with no ground gained and no long-term direction set.

OTHER NEWS HEADLINES OF 1990

TITAN'S PPV FIGHT WITH VIEWERS CHOICE

Just prior to the Royal Rumble, Titan Sports decided to try and make a stand against the cable syndicators. The way pay-per-view, which may become the business' economic base for the future, was set up is that the wrestling promotions would go through a middle-man, that would syndicate its PPV shows and take a cut off the gross.

Titan felt it could do a better job syndicating, and tried to cut out the middle man. Titan used a battle plan which didn't win them favor in the cable industry. While Titan was the one that pulled out of its deal with Viewers Choice before Royal Rumble (traditionally its worst selling PPV, in order to have the fight settled before Wrestlemania, traditionally its best selling), it went on an immediate offensive, spending time on a Dec. 16 PPV show and on its telecasts blaming Viewers Choice and the cable companies. Hulk Hogan talked about how Un-American it was that his fans wouldn't be able to see him win the Royal Rumble.

A few weeks before the event, the fight was settled, on Viewers Choice's terms. While Titan

was able to get several million homes cleared without VC, it was still going to have less than half of the PPV homes cleared without VC. Titan failed in its attempt to do away with the middle-man in this case.

TITAN SIGNS MIKE TYSON, GETS BUSTER DOUGLAS

A funny thing happened while planning a major network wrestling extravaganza this year. Reality got in the way.

Titan Sports had signed Mike Tyson in order to bolster the ratings on a prime-time NBC special designed to hype Wrestlemania. But just two weeks before the



Michael Hayes and Scott Steiner



Jim Cornette with Midnight Express

event, Tyson lost his heavyweight title to unheralded James "Buster" Douglas. Soon after, Tyson pulled out of the refereeing spot for the Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage main event. Titan acted quickly and signed Douglas, who had become a cult-hero as a major underdog who flattened the previously untouched champ.

Douglas didn't help the ratings that much, however, although the WWF got loads of mainstream media publicity with both coups. The NBC special drew just an 11.6 rating, just slightly more viewers than viewed a WWF Saturday Night Main Event show one month earlier.

AWA STOPS RUNNING SHOWS

The Minneapolis-based American Wrestling Association, which had been losing popularity since the wrestling war began in 1984, nearly shut its doors this past year.

The 30-year-old organization (which, ironically, celebrated its 40th birthday amidst television hype to take fans' attention away from the fact they weren't running shows) ran its final show late in the summer. It maintained television on ESPN and in a few markets, and still kept its office running, attempting to put together a major deal which would enable it to start up once again.

SUPERSTAR GRAHAM COMES CLEAN

ON STEROID ABUSE

The same weekend as the WWF had its prime time special, one of its ex-champions contacted the Los Angeles NBC affiliate and told his personal tale of side effects from use of anabolic steroids.

Graham, who held the title in 1977-78, was later backed up in his claim that more than 90 percent of the wrestlers in the WWF were using steroids by another ex-champ, Bruno Sammartino. Graham pointed to his own problems, internal organs failing and degenerative joint disease as a warning sign of what the future of today's wrestlers will be if the business doesn't clean up its act.

Nearly one year later, nothing has changed.

BRUTUS BEEFCAKE IN PARA-SAILING ACCIDENT

Wrestler Ed Leslie (Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake) was severely injured in a July 4 para-sailing accident near Tampa.

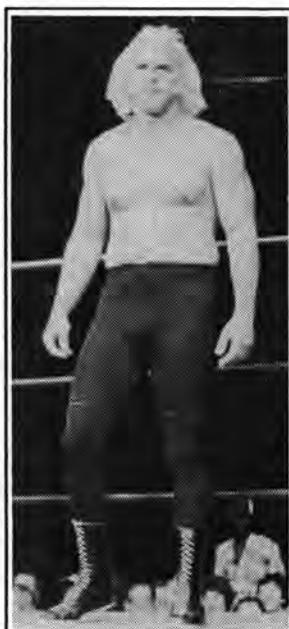
Beefcake was out with several friends, one of whom was wrestler Brian Blair, when an accident occurred when a female companion was taking off at a high speed and her knees caught Beefcake in the jaw which such velocity that it fractured nearly every bone in his face.

After 11 hours of surgery to reconstruct his face, Beefcake, who was in critical condition at one point, started to make a speedy recovery. There is even talk that he will return to wrestling sometime in 1991, but certainly with a protective hockey-goalie like face-mask.

JESSE VENTURA QUILTS WWF

Jesse Ventura, a long-time wrestler who gained even more fame as a color commentator on WWF broadcasts, quit the promotion over the summer after a merchandising dispute.

Ventura had reached an agreement for a video game with his name for Sega-Genesis. This, according to Vince McMahon, was competition for a WWF game with Nintendo. McMahon insisted Ventura back out of his deal. Ventura refused. And that was the end of the story.



Jesse Ventura

Ventura had gained a large cult following as a "heel" announcer, so much so that it led to a few movie roles and enough celebrity status that he and Roddy Piper were to star in an ABC-TV series called "Tag Team" that fell through. Ventura was also the color voice for the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers on local radio, had a game show TV pilot in the works and was elected mayor of his hometown of Brooklyn Park during the last six months of the year.

ONITA DOES STABBING ANGLE WITH JOSE GONZALES

Certainly the most tasteless wrestling angle, possibly of all-time, took place in Puerto Rico.

Atsushi Onita, the promoter of the Frontier Martial Arts and Wrestling (FMW) promotion in Japan, was looking to put together the greatest angle ever. Onita was looking to put together a feud so hot that at some point in 1991, it could be blown off on pay-per-view if that kind of technology makes such a show possible in Japan in the upcoming year.

To do the angle, Onita contacted Jose Gonzales. Gonzales' greatest "fame" in wrestling came as he was charged with the 1988 murder of legendary wrestler Bruiser Brody. Gonzales was acquitted when charged with murder under very dubious circumstances. Onita would go to Puerto Rico, and in the office have a meeting with Gonzales, who was still part-owner of Capital Sports. In the "argument" between the two, Gonzales would stab Onita in the chest, similar to what happened to Brody. Onita would then bring Gonzales to Japan for a huge grudge match, where, in theory, he would avenge the death of a wrestling legend. Onita felt that by beating Gonzales, he would become the most popular wrestler in Japan.

There was such an outcry in Japan about bringing in Gonzales and the poor-taste involved in the angle that Onita decided to drop the angle.

JIM CORNETTE AND STAN LANE QUIT NWA

Just days after the Halloween Havoc pay-per-view show, manager Jim Cornette and half of the Midnight Express, Stan Lane, quit the promotion.

Cornette walked out after a dispute with booker Ole Anderson, but the truth is that trouble had been brewing for several months. Cornette was unhappy with the direction of

the company, and in particular the fact that his team, acknowledged to be one of the two or three best-working teams in the business, was getting phased down. Bobby Eaton, the other half of the team, decided to stay, since he had a wife and several children to support and was getting a guaranteed income of more than \$2,000 per week.

Problems between Cornette and the WCW front office had been brewing since early in the year when Cornette was on the booking committee. After quitting the committee, all three members of the Express trio were given pink slips, not necessarily to be fired, but to have their contracts re-negotiated. Cornette was unhappy since the company rolled over contracts of The Freebirds and Eddie Gilbert at the same time Eaton, Lane and himself received pink slips. At one point during the negotiations, all three had all but quit the promotion until Jim Ross made a plea for them at a booking meeting and they were voted back in.

But with Anderson as booker, they were moved lower on the cards until they were in the opening match at Halloween Havoc. While WCW theory is to have a "hot" match early on big shows, so being in the first match doesn't necessarily mean what being in the opener in traditional wrestling circles means. The match was also advertised and pushed as the opener. In other words, below all the big green monsters in advertising the card was the Midnight Express vs. Rock & Roll Express (later changed to Tommy Rich & Ricky Morton when Robert Gibson injured his knee). The two were also low on the cards at the arena shows, and virtually never won a match.

While the actual argument that led to them leaving was over a minor point, the number of matches Eaton would work on a television taping, it escalated into Cornette and Lane leaving the promotion. As the new year begins, the promotion appears to want Cornette back. Lane's name isn't mentioned as often. With Dusty Rhodes as booker, it seems everyone believed it was only a matter of time in 1991 before Cornette and Lane would return.

RICK RUDE QUILTS WWF



Atsushi Onita with Sambo Asako

After being one of the company's lead heels for several years, "Ravishing" Rick Rude walked out in the fall.

Problems between Rude and promoter Vince McMahon had stemmed back several months, when Rude missed a few weeks with a torn triceps at a time he was to be headlining matches against the Ultimate

Warrior. Apparently Rude felt that since his name had been used to draw the houses (Titan never acknowledged the injury), that he should be receiving main event money from those houses, even though he didn't actually work the shows.

Rude came back and worked all summer against Warrior in main events, but walked out just as a semifinal

program with Big Bossman was getting underway. As the year came to a close, there was a lot of talk of Rude returning, as a baby face, to Titan. But at the same time Rude actually appeared, but didn't wrestle, on a Herb Abrams television taping.

TOP TEN NEWS STORIES OF 1990 IN THE UNITED STATES, JAPAN AND MEXICO

Courtesy of Gong Magazine

UNITED STATES

1. Ultimate Warrior beats Hulk Hogan to win the WWF title
2. Sting beats Ric Flair to win the NWA title
3. WWF participates in Tokyo Dome show on 4/13
4. Road Warriors leave NWA for WWF (it's interesting in hindsight what a minor news story this actually turned out to be)
5. Hulk Hogan-Earthquake angle
6. Kerry Von Erich joins WWF
7. NWA joins with New Japan for 1991 Tokyo Dome show
8. WWF joins with SWS for talent exchanges
9. Stan Hansen wins U.S. title from Lex Luger
10. Joe Pedicino forms GWF; Herb Abrams forms UWF

MEXICO

1. Expansion of Lucha Libre to Japan with Universal and on United States television with EMLL.
2. Kung Fu loses his mask to Atlantis
3. Universal promotion makes its debut in Japan
4. Rayo de Jalisco beats Cien Caras in mask vs. mask match
5. September 21 EMLL show draws 23,000 fans to Arena Mexico
6. **El Hijo Del Santo holds three world titles from two different federations**
7. The Ninja Turtles launch and flop miserably
8. Canek wins UWA title from Big Van Vader on 12/9
9. Yoshihiro Asai wins world middleweight title twice
10. Gory Guerrero dies

JAPAN

1. SWS formed with Genichiro Tenryu leaving All Japan to be its top star
2. Antonio Inoki frees Japanese hostages by meeting with Iraq's Saddam Hussein
3. All Japan and New Japan combine to draw 63,900 fans to the Tokyo Dome on 2/10
4. All Japan, New Japan and WWF combine for 4/13 Tokyo Dome show
5. UWF folds after power struggle between Akira Maeda and Shinji Jin
6. El Gran Hamada's Lucha Libre promotion makes its debut in Japan
7. Koji Kitao makes pro debut, then leaves New Japan after dispute with booker Riki Choshu to join SWS
8. Tiger Mask unmasks as Mitsuhiro Misawa and pins Jumbo Tsuruta at Budokan Hall
9. Keiji Muto, Masa Chono and Shinya Hashimoto become major stars with New Japan
10. FMW draws significant crowds with bloody gimmick matches



Gory Guerrero

WRESTLING OBSERVER AWARDS

CATEGORY A — WINNERS JUDGED ON TOTAL POINTS, FIVE POINTS FOR EACH FIRST PLACE VOTE, THREE POINTS FOR EACH SECOND PLACE VOTE AND TWO POINTS FOR EACH THIRD PLACE VOTE

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1. RIC FLAIR (122)	997
2. Jushin Riger (139)	992
3. Jumbo Tsuruta (136)	887
4. Akira Maeda (56)	595
5. Mitsuhiro Misawa (32)	547

Honorable Mention: Hulk Hogan 414, Mr. Perfect 228, Scott Steiner 203, Lex Luger 122, Keiji Muto 112, Sting 91

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Harley Race
1981 -	Ric Flair
1982 -	Ric Flair
1983 -	Ric Flair
1984 -	Ric Flair
1985 -	Ric Flair
1986 -	Ric Flair
1987 -	Riki Choshu
1988 -	Akira Maeda
1989 -	Ric Flair

CHRIS ZAVISA: After losing its top star plus several mid-level wrestlers, this should have been a bad year for All Japan. You have to give credit to both Jumbo Tsuruta and Mitsuhiro Misawa for keeping their promotion from avoiding the troubles that plagued all the U.S. promotions. Tsuruta gets the nod because he turned his work rate up several notches, producing great matches throughout the year. He was the cornerstone of the promotion and a catalyst around which the younger guys could rally against.

STEVE YOHE: Hulk Hogan seems to be the only wrestler left who can sell tickets. When he was gone, business was bad for everyone. Doing the job for Warrior showed him to be a good company man and loyal to his fans and the business, so he should win the award. I also have to vote for anyone who knows Cory Everson.

MIKE KELLY: Jumbo Tsuruta may not be flashy or do anything extraordinary, but his matches are always good and solid, plus his value to the promotion is great. When he puts somebody over, it means something.

MIKE GENDELMAN: Mitsuhiro Misawa had consistently excellent matches all year. Taking his mask off and pinning Jumbo Tsuruta were two huge stories in Japan this year. As a guy who was really taken for granted as Tiger Mask, I believe he really proved himself this year.

TOM REESE: Hulk Hogan lost his biggest match of the year but still remained the No. 1 face and leading drawing card.

MARK MADDEN: When Genichiro Tenryu and company said sayonara to Baba, most felt it would have a major impact. How wrong they were. Jumbo Tsuruta picked his already consistent performance level up a few notches after his old rival left and made All Japan the best promotion in the world. It's a lot tougher to have impact by staying put than it is by leaving, but that's what Tsuruta did. He beats out Ric Flair, because even though WCW tried to bury him all year, he just

kept shrugging the dirt off to maintain his level as the finest performer in American rings.

STEVE MAS: Even though he missed about half the year, I gave it to Genichiro Tenryu. His impact in leaving All Japan and forming the SWS gives it to him. He was the headliner at the record-setting 2/10 Tokyo Dome show plus had a very important match in the 4/13 Tokyo Dome card. He was also tremendous in the ring.

MYSTERY I: Just watching Ric Flair makes you wonder why pro wrestling as a whole isn't more respected as a sport.

MYSTERY II: Akira Maeda appeared stubborn and fiscally foolish for vetoing the UWF wrestlers working SWS shows. But he wouldn't compromise the UWF style. This anachronistic promotion's popularity hasn't declined at all since many had previous predicted its success was just a flash in the pan. The UWF remains a major player in the market because Maeda continues shooting his shots.

EDDIE GOLDMAN: Despite having to do jobs for half the world, there was no finer wrestler for a fan to watch in 1990 than Ric Flair.

JOHN JANCE: It's not easy carrying the baggage left behind by Hulk Hogan and especially in pinning a man who was actually regarded as a hero to many. As crowds go down, it would upset many other conscientious performers who have to carry a promotion, but the Warrior just went on, oblivious to his obligations as champion.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Mr. Perfect gave excellent performances in his key matches and was willing to do jobs when booked so he was a major asset to his promotion. Even casual fans know this guy is an exceptional worker.

OBIN JOHNSON: Thank goodness for Steve Sims. By supplying us with Japan tapes, a whole new world has been opened. No Jushin Riger match I've seen has been anything below stupendous. His matches are on a level far above anyone else.

STEVE SIMS: Jumbo Tsuruta meant more to his promotion than anyone as in the year it should have slipped to a weak No. 3 group in Japan, it stayed right at No. 1. His hard work and stable presence were the biggest reasons as to why.

JON KARESH: For the first time in years, there really is no solid candidate. Jushin Riger is outstanding in the ring, but he doesn't have the impact on the business that a wrestler of the year should. No. 1 is Akira Maeda. For another year he continued to be a tremendous draw and have an amazing impact on the business. His value was re-affirmed when he was able to survive an inexplicable challenge from the leadership of the UWF. Even though he will work for a promotion with a different name in 1991, I am confident his success will continue.

JOHN MCADAM: Jumbo Tsuruta is a clear winner here. In a very turbulent year for All Japan, he established himself as

the top star of the promotion while at the same time putting over younger wrestlers so that new stars were created.

ALEX MARVEZ: Jumbo Tsuruta gets the nod because: 1. He was invaluable to the promotion. Had he jumped to SWS, All Japan may have been mortally wounded. He stayed, and they were the best promotion; 2. He was able to main event and sellout arenas with a variety of different opponents in different style matches; 3. He is one of the top three workers in the world. He always has top-notch matches and uses different finishing moves in each match.

DAN LENNARD: Jumbo Tsuruta. With the loss of Genichiro Tenryu, Tsuruta has come to the fore for All Japan. He lifted his work rate to the point that he had consistently great matches all year, and he did the job for Mitsuhiro Misawa when the promotion needed to develop a new superstar.

BILL STRONG: To many fans in the U.S., Ric Flair is the NWA. If he had jumped to Titan, I believe attendance would have dipped even farther than it did and Ted Turner would have to shut down WCW. His ring work has been consistent this year even though the quality of his opponents took a turn for the worst. He is still capable of leading anyone to a three-star match.

JEFF COHEN: Through all the chaos in the NWA, the one guarantee was that in front of 500 fans or 5,000, Ric Flair would put out.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: I've got to go with Jushin Riger. His consistency is amazing. His wrestling ability is beyond compare. And he's a consummate professional, willing to put people over whenever it's required.

JOHN MUSE: Jumbo Tsuruta is the obvious winner here. He proved his worth in and out of the ring. He succeeded where Hulk Hogan and Ric Flair failed, in that he created his promotions' new superstar when he put over Mitsuhiro Misawa, but that the creation was a success.

TODD STUTTS: Jushin Riger has had more great matches than anyone.

JOHN CORRIGAN: I chose Jumbo Tsuruta because he's the most important wrestler in Japan and his work rate is on a level with his position.

ANDY STOWELL: Nobody really did anything this year to deserve it. This is the year to finally pick Hulk Hogan to win. He put over his replacement cleanly and without a screw job, and then showed his true box office pull by going into a hot feud that made Summer Slam. Also, he went back to Japan and proved that he can wrestle an excellent match when he wants to. Second goes to Lex Luger. He was forced into an angle switch and quick feud when Sting got put out, and then he cleanly put Stan Hansen over.

MIKE OMANSKY: To more people in the United States than not, Hulk Hogan is wrestling and the undisputed box office king both in times of good and bad crowds. Combine this with his Wrestlemania performance where he worked to the best of his ability in the most important match of 1990 and he is very much on top here.

PAUL HANLIN: For his still outstanding matches, for his actions last January which brought Japan's two arch-rival promotions together for the biggest show in history for sadly, for his appalling phase-down from the top, a tip of the hat to Ric Flair. His ability remains better than just about anyone in the U.S. and his impact on the business this past year can't be stressed enough.

STEVE GERBER: The U.S. wrestling scene still revolves around Ric Flair — "the man." Remember the speculation of Flair's jumping to the WWF for a career-culminating match with Hulk Hogan? How about Flair's tenure as NWA booker and the controversy it provided? And most importantly, the debate on whether Flair should step down from the championship spotlight divided hardcore fans.

MOST OUTSTANDING WRESTLER

1. JUSHIN RIGER (332)	1,746
2. Ric Flair (78)	918
3. Bobby Eaton (21)	539
4. Mr. Perfect (35)	427
5. Mitsuhiro Misawa (8)	311

Honorable Mention: Scott Steiner 298, Jumbo Tsuruta 130, Negro Casas 107, Yoshihiro Asai 87, Randy Savage 82

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1986 - Ric Flair
1987 - Ric Flair
1988 - Tatsumi Fujinami
1989 - Ric Flair

TODD STUTTS: After seeing the January 31 match against Naoki Sano, I was sold on Jushin Riger.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Jushin Riger is simply the best small wrestler since Satoru Sayama. So much of what he does seems like it is physically impossible. His high-risks acrobatics combined with strong technical excellence makes him the best wrestler in the world.

JOHN MUSE: Jushin Riger picked up where Ric Flair left off last year. He fought a wide variety of opponents and brought out the best in every one of them.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Mr. Perfect spent more time carrying stiffs than a professional pallbearer, yet he made everyone look good.

TERESA DEMARIE: I didn't see anyone who could touch Jushin Riger for a wide variety of moves and suicidal tendencies.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: There is still nobody who puts out more in this business than "the man," Ric Flair. He has bled, sweat and paid the price many times and has singlehandedly kept my interest in this, what we know to be the greatest sport in the world. Jushin Riger is a close second because he doesn't work anywhere near as rigorous a schedule as Flair.

TOM REESE: Bobby Eaton gets the nod over Curt Hennig here. Eaton was the most consistent performer night-after-night with a lot of different opponents.



Jushin Riger

MIKE GENDELMAN: Jushin Riger was spectacular in virtually every televised match this year.

DAN LENNARD: Jushin Riger is the best wrestler on a consistent nightly basis in the world today.

ALEX MARVEZ: The worst match I saw Jushin Riger in was a 3½ star match with Cheetah Kid.

STEVE SIMS: Why Jushin Riger? Because I hit the rewind button more often during his matches than during anyone else's.

STEVE MAS: Jushin Riger is so good it's scary. It's amazing the things he does on a regular basis. I feel that when he's on, he's the best performer this business has ever seen. He actually makes other great wrestlers seem pale in comparison.

MARK MADDEN: I'd love to see Jushin Riger wrestle in the NWA where his incredible athletic gifts could be embroiled in some feuds and matches that tell a story besides one of sheer athletic brilliance.

LARRY LOVELL: Jushin Riger has performed at a phenomenal level this year and is drawing comparisons to Satoru Sayama.

RICH SLOVARP: Jushin Riger is the only wrestler that everyone knows will have a great match every time you see him wrestle.

JEFF BOWDREN: There is no such thing as a bad Jushin Riger match.

MIKE KELLY: Night after night, Jushin Riger takes you on a high flying adventure that leaves you with a feeling of awe.

STEVE YOHE: I picked Jumbo Tsuruta over Jushin Riger because his style is stiffer and more believable. Tsuruta has had more four-star matches and gets less credit for them than anyone in wrestling. The praise always goes to whomever he wrestles.

ANDY STOWELL: From Sano to Hart to Hase to those incredible matches with Pegasus Kid, nobody delivers the way Jushin Riger does. I have friends who have expressed no interest whatsoever in wrestling who are total Riger maniacs.

BEST BABY FACE

1. HULK HOGAN (328)	1,773
2. Akira Maeda (32)	556
3. Ultimate Warrior (3)	520
4. Sting (23)	515
5. Mitsuhiro Misawa (31)	319

Honorable Mention: Scott Steiner 176, Jushin Riger 167, Lex Luger 138, Masaharu Funaki 85

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Dusty Rhodes
1981 -	Tommy Rich
1982 -	Hulk Hogan
1983 -	Hulk Hogan
1984 -	Hulk Hogan
1985 -	Hulk Hogan
1986 -	Hulk Hogan
1987 -	Hulk Hogan
1988 -	Hulk Hogan
1989 -	Hulk Hogan

STEVE GERBER: The Hulkster still receives more cheers, brings in more paying customers and sells more merchandise

than any other wrestler in the world. Too bad he's a mediocre, at best, wrestler. However, the name of the game is money and Hogan is the one man any promoter would give his right arm to have in his stable.

JOHN MCADAM: Hulk Hogan and Ultimate Warrior as one and two are almost too easy. They are the only baby faces in wrestling with any widespread appeal.

JOHN JANCE: Hulk Hogan still hasn't lost his touch. His appeal to the kids remains strong despite his loss, and his identification with the sport has remained the standard. In addition, he continued to be the top draw in the United States.

ERNIE SANTILLI: If the Ultimate Warrior accomplished anything in 1990, it was in proving just how valuable Hulk Hogan is to the WWF.

TOM REESE: It's hard to believe that after all these years of doing the same act, Hulk Hogan is still over the way he is.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: How can you discount the power of the immortal Hulk Hogan. Hogan could play "chopsticks" on the kazoo and get a standing ovation. His charisma is unmatched.

MARK MADDEN: Hulk Hogan's act is so old and stale that it's pathetic. There is no way to do anything new with the guy, but there's no reason to, either.

JOHN MUSE: The one image that stands out in my mind is Budokan Hall in Tokyo crying after Mitsuhiro Misawa won the biggest match of his career. If that isn't positive crowd reaction, than what is?

STEVE MAS: For all Hogan, Sting and Warrior have been pushed, they all should draw better than they do. Only Hogan is really still a big draw. But I'll go with Akira Maeda. Even though he's not 100 percent the reason the UWF draws, he is still the heart of the promotion that continued to do sellout business.

ALEX MARVEZ: I'm amazed at how much popularity the Ultimate Warrior has. Every week, I get letters from readers asking that I don't call him The Ultimate Dingboat in my Miami Herald column. Sorry, but no can do. Still, Misawa surpasses him because he was able to go from a semi-main eventer to one of the most popular wrestlers in the world simply by taking off his mask.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Mitsuhiro Misawa had the fans crying because they were so happy when he beat Tsuruta on June 8. What other wrestler got that strong of a fan reaction?

BEST HEEL

1. RIC FLAIR (54)	512
2. Eddie Gilbert (63)	449
3. Ted DiBiase (32)	421
4. Stan Hansen (44)	377
5. Jerry Lawler (47)	361

Honorable Mention: Randy Savage 349, Terry Funk 261, Rick Rude 255, Sid Vicious 232, Mr. Perfect 163, Earthquake 142, Negro Casas 100, Aja Kong 85, Arn Anderson 84

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Larry Zbyszko
1981 -	Don Muraco
1982 -	Buzz Sawyer
1983 -	Michael Hayes
1984 -	Roddy Piper
1985 -	Roddy Piper
1986 -	Michael Hayes

1987 - Ted DiBiase
1988 - Ted DiBiase
1989 - Terry Funk

STEVE GERBER: Negro Casas has to be seen to be believed. He taunts the crowd when he is dominating an opponent until he creates an unruly mob. He pouts when an opponent executes a good move on him. And he knows every dirty trick in the book, and some which aren't there yet.

JOHN MUSE: Terry Funk didn't wrestle with a major promotion in the U.S. He didn't even wrestle much all year. Despite this, he gets my vote. I'll never forget what he did in Pennsylvania in November. The fans were cheering like crazy for him when he entered the ring. Not even five minutes into an incredible mic routine, he had the fans turned against him. It was a work of art. He put every heel I've seen all year to shame.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Jerry Lawler's stick work and general behavior made him the clear cut choice for the top spot even though he didn't remain a heel for the entire year.

MYSTERY II: You can't have a more nasty role than being totally Anti-American. Sgt. Slaughter tries so hard to be hated and it works a good deal of the time.

RICH SLOVARP: Jerry Lawler is so good at being a heel that he should market a videotape on how to be a great heel.

MARK MADDEN: Three were no true heels in wrestling this year, but at least Jerry Lawler had the act down pat before turning face for the zillionth time. His condescending arrogance and interviews even had his own home town hating him.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: A part-time Terry Funk is still better than a full-time anyone else.

DAN LENNARD: This was a bad year for heels. The lead heels in both major U.S. promotions lacked any real interest, however Flair was the best of the bunch.

ALEX MARVEZ: It's a shame Rick Rude is out of wrestling because he is one of the few guys who fans really seem to despise.

MIKE OMANSKY: The Hulk Hogan angle solidified Earthquake as the top heel in wrestling, even if it was for just this year.

MIKE GENDELMAN: Eddie Gilbert's arrival in Memphis really turned things around there. The car angle and all surrounding it were truly classic.

FEUD OF THE YEAR

1. JUMBO TSURUTA VS. MITSUHARU MISAWA (111) 887
2. Ric Flair vs. Sting (56) 550
3. Chris Adams & Toni vs. Steve Austin & Jeannie (61) 389
4. Steiners vs. Nasty Boys (30) 378
5. Jushin Riger vs. Pegasus Kid (52) 373

Honorable Mention: Jerry Lawler vs. Eddie Gilbert 351, Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano 267, Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake 240, Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger 229, Steiners vs. Doom 206, Doom vs. Ric Flair & Arn Anderson 178, Yoshihiro Asai vs. Negro Casas 161, Midnight Express vs. Southern Boys 120

PREVIOUS WINNERS

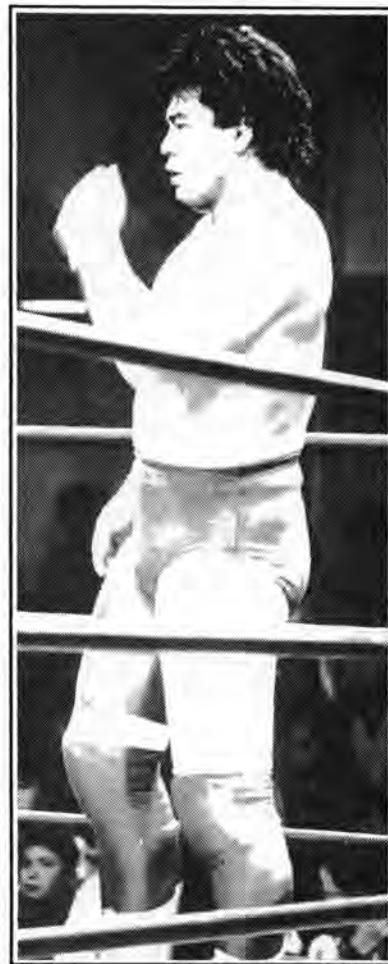
1980 - Bruno Sammartino vs. Larry Zbyszko
1981 - Andre the Giant vs. Killer Khan
1982 - Ted DiBiase vs. Junkyard Dog

1983 - Freebirds vs. Von Erichs
1984 - Freebirds vs. Von Erichs
1985 - Ted DiBiase vs. Jim Duggan
1986 - Hulk Hogan vs. Paul Orndorff
1987 - Jerry Lawler vs. Tommy Rich & Austin Idol
1988 - Midnight Express vs. Fantastics
1989 - Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk

CHRIS ZAVISA:

JUMBO TSURUTA vs. MITSUHARU MISAWA: With Tenryu's abrupt departure, All Japan needed to regroup and elevate a younger wrestler to the top. In a few singles matches, which were all among the years best, and a never-ending series of four-star tag team matches, Tsuruta and Misawa helped Baba rebuild without ever missing a beat. The matches were excellent. They packed houses everywhere and kept up fan interest for the last six months of the year.

TOM REESE: Jerry Lawler vs. Eddie Gilbert. If running a guy over in a parking lot doesn't get feud of the year, nothing else should.



Mitsuharu Misawa

MIKE OMANSKY: Not a great year for feuds. Hogan vs. Earthquake wins because of its ability to draw. This was a masterfully delivered angle that any living creature could understand.

STEVE YOHE: What can you say about Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano that doesn't start with great?

STEVE SIMS: The winner should have been Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake. It should have sold out every arena it was in between the interviews and the build-up, but once Hogan kicked out of the Earthquake splash at Summer Slam, it was all anti-climactic. Anyway, because of that, the winner is Tsuruta vs. Misawa. Hiroshi Hase and Keiji Muto had even better matches but they didn't mean as much to the promotion.

JOHN JANCE: Ric Flair vs. Sting produced the most consistent high quality matches in this country, involving a real-life tragedy and triumph, interesting interviews, the subjugation of Flair and the feud's denouement in the form of the Black Scorpion angle.

JON KARESH: A weak year for feuds. I picked Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Mitsuharu Misawa due to the quality and intensity of the matches, even if there was a lack of baby face-heel heat.

RICH SLOVARP: Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger had some of the best matches of the year in the NWA and drew the biggest crowds.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Toni Adams vs. Jeannie in the USWA, partly because it was well executed, partly because it sold tickets and mostly because I'm a lecher.

OBIN JOHNSON: A great feud needs a great climax and the bloodbath where Jushin Riger won the title back from Naoki Sano was just that. All of their matches together were non-stop dynamite action.

MARK MADDEN: The Chris Adams & Toni vs. Steve Austin & Jeannie feud was sick and depraved. It featured soft-core porn, brutality of women, a story line that featured betrayal of friends and lovers, matches where the main lure to the crowd was the idea that the women would be stripped naked by the end of the match and forgive me God, I loved every second of it.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: When you get as physical as the Steiners and Nasty Boys, that's when you suspend reality for that single moment and realize just how brutal wrestling can be. The match at Havoc was painful to watch.

JOHN MUSE: Mitsuharu Misawa vs. Jumbo Tsuruta had everything, great crowd heat, rivalry and some truly awesome matches.

STEVE MAS: Tsuruta vs. Misawa produced more great matches this year than anything else plus it was the headline feud in another very successful year for All Japan at the box office.

ALEX MARVEZ: A very weak year for good feuds which fans actually cared about. Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Genichiro Tenryu should win, because the feud was still fresh going into its third year and all the matches were top-notch.

PAUL HANLIN: Hogan vs. Earthquake qualifies as a financial boon, but Riger vs. Sano has to win.

STEVE GERBER: For pure wrestling skill and intensity, nothing comes close to Negro Casas vs. Yoshihiro Asai. Whether in Mexico or in Japan, these two put on excellent matches when they were together either as singles or a tag team.

ANDY STOWELL: I haven't seen anything as good as Pegasus Kid vs. Jushin Riger. The match where Kid won the title was a total shock and this feud seems like a great wrestling feud, unlike the feud with Sano which was more of a bloodbath.

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

1. RICK & SCOTT STEINER (215) 1,473
2. Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane (134) 1,136
3. Shawn Michaels & Marty Janetty (24) 545
4. Keiji Muto & Masa Chono (45) 429
5. Ron Simmons & Butch Reed (20) 364

Honorable Mention: Steve Williams & Terry Gordy 181, Mitsuharu Misawa & Toshiaki Kawada 129, Tracy Smothers & Steve Armstrong 112, Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart 88

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1980 - Terry Gordy & Buddy Roberts
1981 - Terry Gordy & Jimmy Snuka
1982 - Stan Hansen & Ole Anderson
1983 - Ricky Steamboat & Jay Youngblood
1984 - Road Warriors
1985 - Dynamite Kid & Davey Boy Smith
1986 - Bobby Eaton & Dennis Condrey
1987 - Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane
1988 - Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane

1989 - Shawn Michaels & Marty Janetty

STEVE GENARRELLI: The Rockers won my vote by having three-star matches with the Powers of Pain.

TODD STUTTS: The Midnight Express have to win because no other team had the quality of matches that they had. Even though the Express isn't together at the end of the year, hopefully they'll reform next year and win this award again.

MARK MADDEN: The Midnight Express had more good matches against more completely different style opponents than anyone around.

STEVE SIMS: Nobody would ever ask Bobby Eaton to risk his family's security, leave guaranteed money and return to chart unknown waters once his current contract was up, would they? Well, I would. Forgive me, but the Midnight Express is the greatest tag team to ever walk the earth, a reputation they proved once again in 1990 despite little respect from the promotion.

TOM REESE: The Rockers are the best tag team in the world but the Midnight Express gets the nod because they had better matches this year.

ALEX MARVEZ: The Steiners get the pick not so much because of their high match quality as compared to the other good teams but because of the freshness of their style. Midnight Express were as good as usual, but weren't placed in a position where they could do anything productive.

JOHN MUSE: The Midnight Express were amazing this year. They were the best tag team in wrestling, but it's too bad their promotion didn't treat them that way.

OBIN JOHNSON: Can you remember the Midnight Express in a bad match? Every match they are in is fluid motion and splendid grace. Add a touch of Jim Cornette and they couldn't be touched. Unfortunately, Mr. Herd didn't realize it.

ERNIE SANTILLI: The Midnight Express had a greater variety of moves and a more balanced attack than any team going. They got the nod for continuing to have excellent matches despite their positioning on the cards.

MYSTERY II: On four PPV shows, the Midnight Express had, in my mind, four four-star matches. Nothing beats that and nobody else is a close second.

STEVE GERBER: The Steiners probably showed more athletic ability in the ring with a combination of difficult wrestling maneuvers, brawling ability and inventiveness.

RICH SLOVARP: The Rockers continued to have good-to-excellent matches in a promotion where you don't get any regard for doing so.

PAUL HANLIN: The Midnight Express gave the NWA more action and great moments than the promotion deserved. Out of all of the NWA's blunders this past year, burying the Midnights in opening matches was completely asinine.

MIKE OMANSKY: The Midnight Express exemplified tag team wrestling at its best. I will never understand why WCW relegated these guys to the point they were just glorified television jobbers.

MOST IMPROVED

1. KENTA KOBASHI (103) 715
2. Ron Simmons (96) 698
3. Scott Steiner (66) 483
4. Paul Roma (23) 256

5. Butch Reed (22) 237

Honorable Mention: Tsuyoshi Kikuchi 203, Madusa 175, Kensuke Sasaki 167, Nasty Boys 145, Brian Pillman 105, Pegasus Kid 99, Undertaker Mark Calaway 84

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1980 - Larry Zbyszko
- 1981 - Adrian Adonis
- 1982 - Jim Duggan
- 1983 - Curt Hennig
- 1984 - The Cobra
- 1985 - Steve Williams
- 1986 - Rick Steiner
- 1987 - Big Bubba Rogers (Big Bossman)
- 1988 - Sting
- 1989 - Lex Luger

ANDY STOWELL: Mean Mark will be the great big man to rival what Don Leo Jonathan was in the 70s. He's the best wrestling big man I've ever seen.

DAN LENNARD: Doom improved from just another masked tag team to one of the best teams in the U.S.

ALEX MARVEZ: I can't believe that Butch Reed has gone from being "The Natural" to the same wrestler he was in the mid-80s. He augments Ron Simmons perfectly.

TERESA DEMARIE: Scott Steiner's ability to do moves has never been questioned, but this year he put them together to make great matches.

MYSTERY II: Big Bossman's decision to lose his extra weight not only improved his health, but his ability. A lot of wrestlers should be that dedicated.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Madusa Miceli's cosmetic surgery provoked titters in certain circles a few years ago, but having seen the dramatic improvement in her wrestling, I'd swear somebody gave her a talent implant. Considering her work and impact, she deserves consideration for Wrestler of the year.

MIKE GENDELMAN: Kenta Kobashi became one of the best performers in the world this year. With his talent, work rate and size he should be in many main events for the rest of the '90s.

STEVE MAS: You have to give Madusa a lot of credit. She worked extremely hard and it showed.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Kenta Kobashi was never a bad wrestler, only a green wrestler. This year he had more four-star matches than anyone with his level of experience. His June 30 match with Toshiaki Kawada was 24 minutes of excellence and one of the ten best matches of the year. Within a year or two he should be the Ric Flair of the 90s.

MYSTERY I: Who could have not too long ago, bleached his hair blond, have pose-downs with Superstar Billy Graham, then hire Hiro Matsuda as his manager in a forgettable feud with JYD and still somehow salvage his wrestling career? Even though the original 1989 NWA plan of teaming Butch Reed and Ron Simmons as The Ebony Experience was tasteless, credit goes to whomever put them together as a team because they excelled. Few are surprised by the strides made this year by Scott Steiner or Ron Simmons, but who expected the rejuvenation of Butch Reed?

JON KARESH: Kenta Kobashi came out of nowhere to be one of the best wrestlers in the world and has an incredible future ahead of him, so he gets my first pick.

RICH SLOVARP: Ron Simmons showed this year that he has a great singles career waiting for him.

WILL DUNHAM: It's stunning that a masked tag team that nobody wanted to see emerged as one of the best tag teams in North America — a real tribute to the hard work of Ron Simmons and Butch Reed. If wrestling were color-blind and promoters weren't tailoring their product for the closed-minded, Simmons would some day be world heavyweight champion.

JOHN MUSE: Terry Funk said that within a few years, Kenta Kobashi may be the best worker in the business. He went from No. 70 last year to the top 20 this year. If this year's improvement is any sign, chalk up one for the Funker.

MIKE KELLY: My first thought was that Ron Simmons was the most improved wrestler over the past year. But then I considered that he worked as a heel all year. Almost anyone can improve that way. But Kenta Kobashi worked as a baby face all year and it's much harder to improve that way.

STEVE SIMS: Where was Tsuyoshi Kikuchi last year? With his size there is no way he should have gotten over like he did, but he did.

MARK MADDEN: If I were Ole....I'd shoot myself. Start over. If I were the WCW booker, I'd have put the belt on Brian Pillman when all the big thinkers were so desperate for a new champion. He has the look, the body, the skill and the charisma. Give him a push and he'd get over.

MOST UNIMPROVED

- 1. STING (64) 519
- 2. Samson Fuyuki (52) 408
- 3. Junkyard Dog (40) 307
- 4. Sgt. Slaughter (28) 203
- 5. Akira Maeda (7) 183

Honorable Mention: Dusty Rhodes 176, Sid Vicious 175, Michael Hayes 160, Jimmy Garvin 157, Ultimate Warrior 151, Kerry Von Erich 130, Jim Duggan 113

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1984 - Jimmy Snuka
- 1985 - Sgt. Slaughter
- 1986 - Bob Orton
- 1987 - Butch Reed
- 1988 - Bam Bam Bigelow
- 1989 - Jim Duggan

CHRIS ZAVISA: You hate to put Sting down for this because it was a freak accident that destroyed his knee. But you have to be pragmatic. Sting gets it. He once could be led to a good match. His crazy high spots added excitement to many of the big cards. But the pressure of carrying the strap certainly hasn't brought out the best in him.

DAN LENNARD: Sgt. Slaughter has been bad for years, but he's never been as bad as since he's rejoined the WWF. His feud with Nikolai Volkoff was the absolute pits.

JOHN MUSE: It was truly sad to watch Samson Fuyuki this year. I find it hard to believe he was once a part of one of the best tag teams in wrestling.

TOM REESE: I realize Sting had to come back from serious knee surgery, however once he got to the top, it looked like he had no desire to stay there or improve.

MARK MADDEN: Sting may have been the first NWA champion to go downhill as soon as he got the belt. Dusty

Rhodes, you understand, went to a smorgasbord the moment he got the belt. The knee injury took more out of him than I think we really knew. Looking back, it's safe to say the peak of his career was Clash I.

WILL DUNHAM: Junkyard Dog stunk entering 1990, but he somehow managed to get even worse.

RICH SLOVARP: After being in one of the best tag teams last year, Samson Fuyuki gained a lot of weight, became sluggish and was promptly booed by the fans.

JON KARESH: The question presents itself, How could the Junkfood Dog possibly get any worse when he was so bad to begin with? Well, due to the genius of Ole Anderson, he was pushed into the main events, a decision that has to rank among the stupidest booking decisions of all-time. A horrible wrestler who was a complete failure in the NWA just one year earlier becomes pushed as a big star all over again. Maybe his wrestling ability didn't get that much worse, but he sure had a lot more visible opportunities to display it.

OBIN JOHNSON: Who in the NWA office likes The Freebirds? Jimmy used to be the lazy one but now Michael Hayes his trying to top his partner.

ERIC KROL: Sgt. Slaughter is back in the mainstream and stinking it up again.

TERESA DEMARIE: Ultimate Warrior hasn't learned a thing by working with some of the best workers in the business. He remains in terrible shape and does the worst interviews besides Jimmy Snuka and Kerry Von Erich in wrestling. He was gasping so hard in the corner of the Sole Survivor match that I thought he was going to inhale a turnbuckle.

JOHN MCADAM: Ted DiBiase went from being the very best wrestler in the world, but after four years in the WWF, where mediocrity in ability is encouraged, he's finally turned into an average wrestler.

MIKE GENDELMAN: Michael Hayes and Jimmy Garvin are a complete joke. Talk about disgracing a great legend and a gimmick.

ANDY STOWELL: I give this to the promotion World Championship Wrestling. Last year was my favorite year to be a wrestling fan. This year the NWA screwed things up so badly that I seriously hope they go out of business. They've lost almost all their talent. They have no good feuds, no good angles. They don't care at all about what the fans want to see. People come and go for no logical reason. They have no heels. They have no faces that are over. They put a basketball player freak who couldn't make it in the NBA and call him their hope for the future. They even considered letting Dusty Rhodes back in.

STEVE GERBER: What more can be said about JYD. Given an unbelievable push, including title matches against Ric Flair was one of the reasons the NWA took a major step in the wrong direction this year.

MOST OBNOXIOUS

1. VINCE MCMAHON (72)	612
2. Ultimate Warrior (60)	557
3. Dusty Rhodes (51)	379
4. Herb Abrams (47)	296
5. Jim Herd (40)	259

Honorable Mention: Gorilla Monsoon 244, Ole Anderson 187, Jose Gonzales 167, Brother Love 155, Hulk Hogan 141, Ed Whalen 108, Gene Okerlund 106, Junkyard Dog 90

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1981 -	"Judo" Gene LeBelle
1982 -	David Crockett
1983 -	Vince McMahon
1984 -	Vince McMahon
1985 -	Vince McMahon
1986 -	Vince McMahon
1987 -	David Crockett
1988 -	Dusty Rhodes
1989 -	Dusty Rhodes

STEVE GERBER: Vince McMahon air of superiority is getting worse. His endless shilling for PPV shows is too predictable.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Jose Gonzales and Atsushi Onita share this award for being sick enough to come up with such a disgusting angle. Thank God for the Japanese public that told both to shove it.

MARK MADDEN: All those glorious years of savaging Dusty Rhodes in the poll. I've always thought that maybe he had some class, however. Sure, he over-pushed himself to make a buck. But that's just pride. Dusty Rhodes would never do anything like compromise his dignity for money. He'd never wear something to make himself look even more disgusting, like, say polka dots. He'd never take on the ugliest, fattest black woman with crooked teeth to be his valet. He'd never do demeaning skits to get his character over. Yep, I thought that. But I was wrong.

WILL DUNHAM: Jim Duggan, because I hate phony nationalism, horrendous interviews, incredibly bad matches and a worthless finishing maneuver. What a treat it is to watch him.

MYSTERY I: Having read about the Oakland Two incident, I kept an eye on Rene Goulet at a recent WWF house show because somebody about 30 feet to my left was screaming, "Hasbro, Hasbro!" during a Sgt. Slaughter match. From the security railing at ringside, a perturbed Rene Goulet stared up at the balcony where the "heckler" was. He was about 15 to 20 rows up. Not unlike Jack Victory in the classic 900 number commercials, Goulet barked orders into his walkie-talkie. Within one minute, security guards were standing behind the section. Nobody was approached or ejected but everyone kept quiet until the guards left after Sarge delivered the atomic noogie finisher.

TERESA DEMARIE: Is there anything more obnoxious than a puffed-up Neanderthal who can't talk holding the world title, with no wrestling talent and the most exposure of anyone in the business like the Ultimate Warrior?

MYSTERY II: Everything about Herb Abrams made me sick, from his voice, his promotion, his lies, etc.

JOHN JANCE: Gordon Solie continues to be the most overrated announcer of all-time. It certainly seems like I've been listening to his monotonous prattle for 2,000 years.

JOHN MCADAM: This is for the wrestling personality that gets under your skin the most, and Gorilla Monsoon fits that description perfectly. I'll never forget the time he wanted to have a parade for Hulk Hogan by rationalizing that they had one from that Mandella guy. Talk about a culturally illiterate individual.

DAN LENNARD: No one can top the Ultimate Warrior, considering unintelligible interviews, lack of ability and rampant egotism.

BEST ON INTERVIEWS

1. ARN ANDERSON (82)	704
2. Jerry Lawler (103)	701
3. Jim Cornette (81)	630
4. Ric Flair (42)	427
5. Ole Anderson (25)	297

Honorable Mention: Terry Funk 202, Larry Zbyszko 191, Eddie Gilbert 155, Hulk Hogan 117, Randy Savage 112, Roddy Piper 93, Paul E. Dangerously 92

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1981 - Lou Albano and Roddy Piper (tied)
1982 - Roddy Piper
1983 - Roddy Piper
1984 - Jimmy Hart
1985 - Jim Cornette
1986 - Jim Cornette
1987 - Jim Cornette
1988 - Jim Cornette
1989 - Terry Funk

STEVE GENNARELLI: When Jerry Lawler hangs up his crown for good, he could teach Interviewing Technique 101 in wrestling schools. His versatility is rare in this era of scripted interviews.

JOHN MCADAM: On February 6, 1990, the crowd cheered wildly as the Four Horsemen approached the ring. After five minutes of Ole Anderson, Ole, Arn Anderson and Ric Flair were the most hated men in wrestling. Now that's what I call a great interview.

MARK MADDEN: No contest. Arn Anderson leaves everyone else way behind. He's timely, he's topical and he's realistic. He also deals very well with others in cross-talk situations, something many others don't. He did an interview with Tom Zenk after the balloting period that made me want to run to Center Stage and slap Zenk.

JEFF BOWDREN: Jerry Lawler for three reasons. First, there was the Kerry Von Erich/Jeff Jarrett steroid test interview. Second, there was the Jerry Lawler-King Cobra skit where Lawler went into the production booth and slapped the director, and finally The Snowman skit where Lawler turned from heel to face in one interview.

DAN LENNARD: For originality, Jerry Lawler's heel interviews were tremendous.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Arn Anderson has always been a great interview but he took it to another level of intensity this year.

OBIN JOHNSON: Arn Anderson's interviews are the ones to listen to. They are intelligent, witty and fun to listen to. He makes the viewer want to see the match he's talking about.

JOHN JANCE: Jim Cornette never ceases to amaze me. The only performer in wrestling who, when he talks, you can't divert your attention for the slightest instant for fear of missing another gem. Even with the LPWA he is so compelling that he brings a touch of class and legitimacy to them.

MYSTERY II: For the first half of the year it has to go to Ric Flair. His post-cage match interview at Capital Combat will always be a classic to me.

TODD STUTTS: Arn Anderson was far and away the best interview this past year. He is more articulate and intelligent than anyone else. I'm in complete awe when he gets on a roll because he blows everyone else away.

STEVE GERBER: Ole Anderson is the only wrestling personality who presents himself in an effective heel manner and still makes sense.

MOST CHARISMATIC

1. HULK HOGAN (270)	1,579
2. Akira Maeda (45)	732
3. Ultimate Warrior (32)	621
4. Ric Flair (20)	287
5. Sting (12)	274

Honorable Mention: Sid Vicious 270, Roddy Piper 101

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 - Ric Flair
1981 - Michael Hayes
1982 - Dusty Rhodes and Ric Flair (tied)
1983 - Ric Flair
1984 - Ric Flair
1985 - Hulk Hogan
1986 - Hulk Hogan
1987 - Hulk Hogan
1988 - Sting
1989 - Hulk Hogan

STEVE GERBER: Hogan still appeals to a hero-starved American public. His ability to overcome even the greatest odds and the most evil of individuals provides some psychological need for security, even though it is all fiction based.

DAN LENNARD: Sid Vicious does so little, but is so over that it's frightening.

TOM REESE: When Hulk Hogan appears, you have to put ear plugs in.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Hogan still gets the biggest pop in the business. Thousands pay good money every night to his posing ritual. How an aging poor worker could elicit this rabid response is one of life's great mysteries, but only a fool would deny its truth.

MARK MADDEN: This is a tale of three different kinds of charisma. Hulk Hogan sucks in the ring and his "take your vitamins" shtick is nauseating in light of the fact you know that his breakfast consists of bacon, eggs and dianabol. He's repetitive in the ring and on interviews but people love him because he has charisma. We're told to hate Sid Vicious. He was pushed as the NWA's top heel. He was matched against their top baby face. Yet people still cheered him, because he's got charisma. Ric Flair we're coached to be ambivalent about. We're not supposed to care about him. He was buried by stupidity and humiliated by people like JYD. Yet people still cheer him, because he's got charisma. They also cheer him because he's the greatest wrestler ever, and as for the other two guys, there's no accounting for taste.

MYSTERY I: Sid Vicious is supposed to be booed by fans. However, when the Black Scorpion casted a spell upon Sid to bestow some badly need wrestling skills, the hocus pocus choked us and still left Vicious without talent. Yet the spell enchanted him with this enigmatic baby face charisma which generates countless cheers from NWA fans.

RICH SLOVARP: The Ultimate Warrior sells a lot of tickets and it isn't through wrestling talent.

JOHN JANCE: The Ultimate Warrior. What he does in the ring can't even remotely be considered as wrestling, yet whatever it is, the crowd doesn't care. They are into every move he makes. The brevity of his matches contributes to his aura as Hulk Hogan's successor, right down to his copying the

Superman comeback routine. They've attempted to humanize him in interviews that fall flat, yet the crowd still pops for him.

ERNIE SANTILLI: When it comes to holding an audience in the palm of one's hand, Hulk Hogan is the wrestling equivalent of Mick Jagger.

BEST TECHNICAL WRESTLER

1. JUSHIN RIGER (240)	1,413
2. Ric Flair (64)	590
3. Bobby Eaton (59)	519
4. Mr. Perfect (34)	349
5. Scott Steiner (30)	266

Honorable Mention: Negro Casas 180, Naoki Sano 159, Bret Hart 156, Nobuhiko Takada 144, Keiji Muto 137, Mitsuharu Misawa 124, Hiroshi Hase 95

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Bob Backlund
1981 -	Ted DiBiase
1982 -	Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama)
1983 -	Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama)
1984 -	Dynamite Kid and Masa Saito (tied)
1985 -	Tatsumi Fujinami
1986 -	Tatsumi Fujinami
1987 -	Nobuhiko Takada
1988 -	Tatsumi Fujinami
1989 -	Jushin Riger

CHRIS ZAVISA: Jushin Riger is so good that he is nearly flawless. He carried a non-wrestler like Seiji Aoyagi to a decent match. When he has a good opponent, his matches are a thing of beauty. He is so far ahead of the rest of the profession that it is almost scary.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Nobody embodies the technical aspects of pro style better than Jushin Riger. He is grace in motion in the ring and can do it all.

JOHN MUSE: Jushin Riger was great in that he uses a wide variety of difficult moves and rarely ever misses one.

TOM REESE: What can be said about Bobby Eaton? He did more different moves against more different opponents than just about anyone.

TODD STUTTS: No matter what anyone says, Ric Flair is still the best in the world at carrying anyone to a great match. Even though he didn't have Ricky Steamboat or Terry Funk this year, his matches with Lex Luger and Sting were always good and often great.

MARK MADDEN: The difference between Jushin Riger, Ric Flair and Bobby Eaton is so small that you could barely fit Ole's brain between it.

STEVE MAS: Clearly, Jushin Riger can do anything in a wrestling ring, plus things that nobody else can do or would even want to try.

BRUISER BRODY MEMORIAL AWARD (BEST BRAWLER)

1. STAN HANSEN (212)	1,286
2. Atsushi Onita (131)	848
3. Terry Gordy (30)	477
4. Terry Funk (53)	469
5. Aja Kong (7)	168

Honorable Mention: Steve Williams 150, Jerry Lawler 126, Nasty Boys 125, Eddie Gilbert 111

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Bruiser Brody
1981 -	Bruiser Brody
1982 -	Bruiser Brody
1983 -	Bruiser Brody
1984 -	Bruiser Brody
1985 -	Stan Hansen
1986 -	Terry Gordy
1987 -	Bruiser Brody
1988 -	Bruiser Brody
1989 -	Terry Funk

STEVE GERBER: Aja Kong is a flashback to the glory days of Dump Matsumoto. Pure, totally believable violence. You have to feel sorry for the baby faces that get demolished in her wake.



Stan Hansen

JOHN JANCE: Stan Hansen is one of the few performers, who as he enters the ring, the fans expect to see a brawl. Whether he's become slower or not, he makes the attempt.

ALEX MARVEZ: It seems great brawling is in a decline because the great brawling style wrestlers are being replaced by steroid idiots. Terry Funk is in a class by himself.

RICH SLOVARP: Atsushi Onita had the most exciting and bloodiest matches of the year.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Atsushi Onita built a successful promotion around arena-wide brawling and blood. His tag team match with Tarzan Goto against Masanobu Kurisu and Dragon Master was the best brawl in Tokyo in many years. When it comes to all-out mayhem, nobody touches him.

MIKE GENDELMAN: After seeing Terry Funk vs. Stan Hansen from New Jersey and some Funk matches in Pennsylvania in November, there is no doubt that Funk is by far the most accomplished brawler.

TODD STUTTS: Stan Hansen defines the brawling style perfectly with his stiff work style. Watching him brutalize an opponent makes me cringe.

JEFF BOWDREN: Atsushi Onita is the best one in a down year.

STEVE SIMS: I wasn't going to vote for Atsushi Onita because of what he did with Jose Gonzales but then he clobbered me with a chair. Then he threw me into the ropes made out of barbed wire and they exploded with fireworks on my back. Then he threw me over the top rope onto barbed wire on the floor. Then he threw me through four rows of chairs. I was cut from 372 different body parts, none of which

were my head. Then he gave me a pile driver on a chair on the arena floor filled with barbed wire so I changed my vote.

MARK MADDEN: Sometimes I think this award died with Frank Goodish because nobody can even live up to his standards. Ironically, Onita is an easy choice even though he tried to capitalize on Brody's death with the Gonzales angle. He was involved in a ton of great brawls in 1990 and used juice more often than anyone has in a long time to get the brawl over.



Bruiser Brody

JOHN MUSE: I know he tried the most disgusting angle of the year but Atsushi Onita deserves this award. He was the best brawler of 1990.

BEST FLYING WRESTLER

1. JUSHIN RIGER (419)	2,189
2. Yoshihiro Asai (15)	411
3. Bobby Eaton (18)	374
4. Pegasus Kid	337
5. Keiji Muto	336

Honorable Mention: Owen Hart 302, Brian Pillman 302, Mitsuharu Misawa 273, Atlantis 268, Super Astro 256, Shawn Michaels 85, El Hijo Del Santo 84

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1981 -	Jimmy Snuka
1982 -	Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama)
1983 -	Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama)
1984 -	Dynamite Kid
1985 -	Tiger Mask (Mitsuharu Misawa)
1986 -	Tiger Mask (Mitsuharu Misawa)
1987 -	Owen Hart
1988 -	Owen Hart
1989 -	Jushin Riger

STEVE GERBER: Whenever I want to impress a friend who hasn't seen much pro wrestling, I'll pop in a tape of Jushin Riger. No one can touch him for speed, daring and inventiveness.

TOM REESE: Jushin Riger does some of the most spectacular high spots ever. He ranks right up there with Satoru Sayama.

MARK MADDEN: Yoshihiro Asai's moonsault outside the ring is the most daring flying move in ages. Put that with the rest of his repertoire and you have the best flying wrestler in the world.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Jushin Riger. The surprise is not that he's going to win this category again but that he's still alive to acknowledge his victory. Must be something about wearing a weird mask that makes you defy gravity.

MIKE GENDELMAN: I likened seeing Yoshihiro Asai for the first time with the first time I saw Satoru Sayama and Owen Hart. All three times I was simply blown away within the first minutes of the match. While Asai isn't quite in the league with Sayama and Hart as an overall wrestler, he probably has them beat when it comes to suicidal moves.

STEVE MAS: The great thing about Jushin Riger is that he can take the wildest flying maneuvers and put them in sequence to make the match seem legit.

JOHN MUSE: From flipping over the top rope onto his opponents to the shooting star press, Riger did it all this year. Even an appendix operation didn't keep him grounded when he returned. Riger will have a tough time three-peating next year because Yoshihiro Asai is gaining ground, or should I say air.

MOST OVERRATED

1. ULTIMATE WARRIOR (144)	975
2. Sting (65)	554
3. Sid Vicious (49)	437
4. Dino Bravo (28)	356
5. Earthquake (27)	300

Honorable Mention: Hulk Hogan 289, Dusty Rhodes 104, Akira Maeda 103

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Mr. Wrestling II
1981 -	Pedro Morales
1982 -	Pedro Morales
1983 -	Bob Backlund
1984 -	Big John Studd
1985 -	Hulk Hogan
1986 -	Hulk Hogan
1987 -	Dusty Rhodes
1988 -	Dusty Rhodes
1989 -	Ultimate Warrior

PAUL HANLIN: Sorry Vince, no matter how many times you tell me your world champion (Warrior) and top heel (Earthquake) are world beaters, the truth is that neither of them could beat Ric Flair's breakfast eggs.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Stop 100 people on the street and ask them who is America's greatest pro wrestler. You can bet the ranch that Hulk Hogan would win in a landslide.

TOM REESE: Why Earthquake and Dino Bravo continue to get big pushes is beyond me.

JEFF COHEN: So Sting is the future of the NWA? Give me back my 1989.

STEVE MAS: By far the most overrated is Sid Vicious. I realize that everyone knows he's a bad worker, but it seems to me because of his physical size people think he should be pushed to the top. Maybe after seeing him have to try and work at the Clash in a situation where he was unprotected, people won't think that as much.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: The Ultimate Warrior is going to be crammed down our throats like Hulk Hogan and has maybe one-tenth his wrestling ability.

MARK MADDEN: I don't know who the Texas Tornado slept with to get the WWF Intercontinental title. Don't answer that question, Bowdren.

TERESA DEMARIE: Only the NWA could believe that an overgrown surfer boy with one of the most annoying interview

styles in the business and a modicum of ring skill was trendy and the guy to build a promotion around.

ANDY STOWELL: The Sting watch I got died two days after I got it. That's almost as fast as his title reign died.

JON KARESH: So many good choices here. But the top has to go to Earthquake and Dino Bravo. I will never be able to figure Bravo out. A terrible wrestler, slow, sluggish, dull, no charisma, bad interviews and yet they'll never stop pushing him in the WWF, even when he never draws time after time. But Earthquake still gets my vote because he was pushed all year as the lead heel. If it hadn't have been in such a great angle with Hulk Hogan, his weaknesses would have been recognized much earlier.

RICH SLOVARP: When people tell me how great a wrestler Sid Vicious is, all I can do is laugh. Most people have no idea just how bad a wrestler he really is.

MOST UNDERRATED

1. BOBBY EATON (54)	356
2. Brian Pillman (45)	339
3. Brad Armstrong (30)	316
4. Terry Taylor (23)	235
5. Tommy Rogers (23)	207

Honorable Mention: Tsuyoshi Kikuchi 205, Tito Santana 178, Kenta Kobashi 159, Cactus Jack 140, Toshiaki Kawada 133, Barry Horowitz 124, Scotty the Body 122, Tony Anthony 114, Buddy Landel 108, Pegasus Kid 99, Bret Hart 87

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 - Iron Sheik
1981 - Buzz Sawyer
1982 - Adrian Adonis
1983 - Dynamite Kid
1984 - Brian Blair
1985 - Bobby Eaton
1986 - Bobby Eaton
1987 - Brad Armstrong
1988 - Tiger Mask (Mitsuharu Misawa)
1989 - Dan Kroffat

PAUL HANLIN: By their employers, the winners would have to be the Midnight Express. Being stuck in the opening match at Halloween Havoc and low on every other card while superstars like J.W. Storm, Junkfood Dog and Moondog Rex follow them on cards confirms to me that loyalty and hard work are merely words in the dictionary.

ALEX MARVEZ: Joe Malenko is the best technical wrestler in the business, which has gotten him no publicity.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Tsuyoshi Kikuchi is a virtual unknown. Here is a guy who works like a demon to get over and takes more punishment in a match than most guys take in a month of matches. Even so-called wrestling experts don't even know who he is.

JOHN MCADAM: If you saw Terry Funk for the first time and had to guess his age, what would you say? He's probably the best heel in the business, he doesn't look his age, he doesn't talk his age and he certainly doesn't wrestle his age. I wish promoters and fans would forget about the date on his birth certificate and worry about what he does in the ring. Why knows, U.S. wrestling might become exciting again.

JOHN MUSE: The one person who stands out is Tommy Rogers. He can go move-for-move with anyone in wrestling but he doesn't get much recognition. It's a shame he's not working full-time anywhere.

JOHN JANCE: Mike Shaw is a fine performer and personality that was totally rendered useless through the insanity and jealousy of the NWA booker.

MYSTERY I: Ted Petty is the most underrated performer by the wrestling establishment since the decline of the regional offices. Though not to be confused with Tiger Mask, he can be an electrifying high-flying alternative to today's standard Huff'n'Puff'n'Pose steroid stooges we have to endure.

JON KARESH: When will the NWA or any wrestling promotion realize that they have one of the hottest heels right under their noses and give Terry Taylor his much deserved and long-awaited push. The guy has it all, exceptional wrestling ability, a great heel-like arrogance and tremendous interview potential if given the chance.

STEVE MAS: Tony Anthony has worked his butt off for years on every small circuit in the United States.

MIKE GENDELMAN: Kenta Kobashi and Toshiaki Kawada will both probably have to wait until Jumbo Tsuruta retires before they get the push they really deserve.

BEST PROMOTION

1. ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING (167)	1,802
2. New Japan Pro Wrestling (81)	1,101
3. Japan UWF (45)	712
4. World Wrestling Federation (61)	548
5. World Championship Wrestling (39)	461

Honorable Mention: United States Wrestling Association 250, All Japan Women Wrestling Association 120, Universal Wrestling Association Mexico 103

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1983 - Jim Crockett Promotions
1984 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1985 - All Japan Pro Wrestling
1986 - Universal Wrestling Federation (U.S.)
1987 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1988 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1989 - Universal Wrestling Federation (Japan)

DAN LENNARD: For quality of production and merchandising, Titan Sports is king, but for quality of wrestling, then I'll take New Japan.

JEFF COHEN: Who packed all their houses and was the only promotion that had people convinced they were real? The UWF. Past those two things, nothing much else matters.

TOM REESE: After being stripped of his biggest star and half of his undercard wrestlers, Giant Baba's All Japan did one hell of a job in keeping the promotion hot with a bunch of fresh young workers.

STEVE MAS: All Japan from every standpoint is No. 1. Great work rate, great booking and they know how to keep the fans happy. U.S. promoters should take some lessons.

MARK MADDEN: Clean finishes. Great matches. Great television. Great crowds. Nobody comes close to All Japan this year. To achieve that status after things very easily could have fallen apart of Tenryu's defection is amazing.

STEVE SIMS: All Japan. If I only saw U.S. promotions, I'd have to pass on this category. Nobody qualifies. The best would be the WWF, but they promote vaudeville and comedy and not wrestling.

CHRIS ZAVISA: For the second year in a row, All Japan is the best. Given Tenryu's defection, this should have been an off-year for All Japan. But Baba quickly restructured things around Tsuruta and Misawa and gave big TV pushes to some great young talent. It was a successful formula that sold house show tickets. Three years ago All Japan was a tired and staid promotion. Now it is one of the most exciting.

ANDY STOWELL: Nobody, I mean nobody has as great a crew of talented wrestlers as New Japan. These guys may be the answer to saving American wrestling as well. If anyone can pull WCW out of the toilet, these would be the guys. At least I'm pulling for it.

RICH SLOVARP: I like All Japan because of its policy to have clean finishes in every match.

MYSTERY II: It's hard to find a lot of faults with All Japan. They are so well put together. They have great matches. They have great shows. They sell tickets.

JOHN MUSE: When Genichiro Tenryu left, I thought All Japan was in big trouble. They're placed Tenryu with Mitsu-haru Misawa and gave bigger roles to their younger and hungry talent. Eight months later, All Japan couldn't be in better shape. That's why they deserve to win.

STEVE GERBER: Any time a promotion can sell out every card of the year with just one exception, then they have to be doing something right. From a pure business standpoint, nobody comes close to Akira Maeda's UWF.

PAUL HANLIN: As clear a choice as the UWF was last year, All Japan is this year. The double whammy of a time slot demotion plus the loss of its No. 1 wrestler and half of its natives to SWS should have sent them down to the level of the NWA. It didn't, thanks to Baba, the promoter (not the wrestler).

BEST TELEVISION SHOW

1. ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING (195) 1,343
2. New Japan Pro Wrestling (104) 1,068
3. WWF Superstars of Wrestling (68) 562
4. World Championship Wrestling (60) 551
5. USWA Wrestling Challenge (32) 287

Honorable Mention: WMC Championship Wrestling Memphis 265, WWF Prime Time Wrestling 173, Lucha Libre 157, NWA Main Event 144, NWA Pro Wrestling 134, NWA Power Hour 114

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1983 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1984 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1985 - Mid South Wrestling
1986 - UWF Wrestling (U.S.)
1987 - CWA 90 minute Memphis show
1988 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1989 - All Japan Pro Wrestling

DAN LENNARD: Titan's Superstars of Wrestling is the perfect wrestling television show, except for the wrestling. It gets across the big names and major angles, while at the same time hawks all its merchandise.

TOM REESE: All Japan constantly provides solid top-notch action every week.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Jerry Lawler and Eddie Gilbert proved that creativity, not budget, is the key to producing the most consistently entertaining wrestling program of 1990. It's

refreshing to watch a TV show booked by a wrestler where the show doesn't revolve around the wrestler.

CLINT FREEMAN: With exciting weekly shows and frequent match of the year candidates, no other show came close to New Japan in 1990.

MYSTERY I: The trio of Lance Russell, Michael Hayes and Jimmy Garvin made NWA Pro at least the most enjoyable show to listen to in 1990. When an exasperated Russell uttered, "yeah, yeah, yeah," I was on the floor when Garvin quipped, "Hey, Lance, you've been hanging around me too much lately. You're starting to talk like me now."

STEVE MAS: All Japan's main events are always very good and often great.

MYSTERY II: All Japan's television shows deliver at least one great match and do a great job in promoting the product like it should be.

TERESA DEMARIE: WWF Superstars of Wrestling is a perennial favorite, with the best color commentators around, Ventura and Piper and the slickest post-production look. The content isn't much, but that hasn't mattered until recently.

MATCH OF THE YEAR

1. JUSHIN RIGER VS. NAOKI SANO
1/31 Osaka (201) 1,394
2. Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Mitsu-haru Misawa
6/8 Tokyo (43) 465
3. Midnight Express vs. Southern Boys
7/8 Baltimore (42) 444
4. Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior
4/1 Toronto (56) 416
5. Steiners vs. Nasty Boys
10/27 Chicago (29) 289

Honorable Mention: Atsushi Onita & Tarzan Goto vs. Dragon Master & Masanobu Kurisu 4/1 Tokyo 233, Keiji Muto vs. Hiroshi Hase 9/14 Hiroshima 232, Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger 2/25 Greensboro 195, Fantastics vs. Joe Malenko & Tsuyoshi Kikuchi 172, Yoshihiro Asai vs. Negro Casas 6/7 Tokyo 99, Jushin Riger vs. Pegasus Kid 8/19 Tokyo 97

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1980 - Bob Backlund vs. Ken Patera in Madison Square Garden
1981 - Pat Patterson vs. Sgt. Slaughter 4/21 Madison Square Garden
1982 - Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama) vs. Dynamite Kid 8/25 Tokyo
1983 - Ric Flair vs. Harley Race 11/24 Greensboro
1984 - Freebirds vs. Von Erichs 7/4 Fort Worth
1985 - Tiger Mask (Mitsu-haru Misawa) vs. Kuniaki Kobayashi 6/12 Tokyo
1986 - Ric Flair vs. Barry Windham 2/14 Orlando
1987 - Ricky Steamboat vs. Randy Savage 3/29 Pontiac
1988 - Ric Flair vs. Sting 3/27 Greensboro
1989 - Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat 4/2 New Orleans

MIKE OMANSKY: Hogan-Warrior brought excitement, drama and a big gate and delivered. There were many better matches, but this was the battle of the Titans and each Titan wrestled to the best of his ability. In five years, people will remember this match on a broad scale.

ALEX MARVEZ: Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger from 2/25 in Greensboro was an outstanding match with a great finish that picked up business and allowed the promotion to stumble all the way through its next pay-per-view. Jushin Riger vs.

Naoki Sano was technically a better match, but it didn't have as much impact.

STEVE YOHE: I picked Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior because it was a four-star match and it headlined the most important card of the year. True, it seemed like a great match mainly because I didn't expect much from the two and because of the finish. But it was a well-booked match that had more historical importance than any other match this year. If you were going to judge by the work in the match, you'd have to pick Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano as the best because it was the only match of 1990 that could be compared with the best matches of 1989. But you expect matches with Riger, Midnight Express and Ric Flair to be great.

MYSTERY II: The Bash match between Midnight Express and Southern Boys was incredible. The heat, the outside antics from Jim Cornette, the bumps, the moves. Just a super match.

SAM NORD: There was something in the 1/31 Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano match for every type of wrestling fan. Realistic brawling, proficient technical wrestling and aerial maneuvers that Superman would be proud of.

RICH SLOVARP: The Onita & Goto vs. Kurisu & Dragon Master street fight is what pro wrestling is all about. Chair shots, quadruple juice, belt whipping and brawling into the stands.

JOHN JANCE: Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior wins more for its meaning than the quality of the match itself. One could say that this was probably the best match either has ever performed in (and it certainly was Hellwig's best, although he himself had very little to do with it). As a match, the NWA produces many better on a regular basis, but what match had the impact and was as well handled at this one? Compare Hogan's exit with Ric Flair's a few months later. A great wrestler like Flair was absolutely ignored despite what he'd done for the NWA. Hogan received the gracious and grateful exit he deserved. The fireworks display at the end capped off one of wrestling's most memorable moments.

STEVE MAS: Genichiro Tenryu & Tiger Mask vs. Riki Choshu & George Takano from the 2/10 Tokyo Dome. The impact of All Japan and New Japan working together for the first time in years, plus setting a gate record and this being a super, super match with the most heat of any match I've seen in years puts it on top.

ERNIE SANTILLI: For me, the match of the year has to have a high level of energy, electrifying spots, dramatic intensity and must leave the viewer with great respect for all of the participants. With that in mind, I'll pick Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Mitsuharu Misawa on June 8.

JEFF BOWDREN: The Akira Hokuto vs. Manami Toyoda 8/19 match was so good it should be a required training film at every wrestling school.

MARK MADDEN: It was a little artificial and devoid of emotion but for move after move at an unbelievable pace, nothing topped the Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano match. It had less of a story line than last year's Flair-Steamboat matches, but it was played at 78 RPM instead of 45.

JOHN MUSE: As far as wrestling goes, the Japanese dominated this year. The 1/31 Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano match was the best the year had to offer. The finish was picture perfect, Riger with his mask ripped wide open and covered in blood from head-to-toe, climbing the top rope and executing the shooting star press to regain the title.

TOM REESE: Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano on 1/31 in Osaka had incredible intensity and one spectacular move after another.

er. It contained the dramatic revelation of Keiichi Yamada when the mask came off and with the shooting star press to finish things off, both guys were in another galaxy on that night.

TODD STUTTS: Watching Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano from Osaka on January 31 was absolute heaven for me. What more could you ever ask for from a wrestling match?

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

1. STEVE AUSTIN (218)	1,211
2. Koji Kitao (31)	573
3. Richard Slinger	287
4. Billy Black	125
5. Larry Oliver	69

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1980 -	Barry Windham
1981 -	Brad Rheingans and Brad Armstrong (tied)
1982 -	Steve Williams
1983 -	Road Warriors
1984 -	Tom Zenk and Keiichi Yamada (tied)
1985 -	Jack Victory
1986 -	Bam Bam Bigelow
1987 -	Brian Pillman
1988 -	Gary Allbright
1989 -	Dustin Rhodes

ANDY STOWELL: Maybe Chris Adams will finally get to make his mark in wrestling with his students. If they're half as good as Steve Austin, he may have the pulse of wrestling in his back pocket. Koji Kitao doesn't deserve all the criticism the Japanese give him. He'd be a big star in the U.S. with the same style.

STEVE SIMS: I thought Koji Kitao was very good for a rookie and I do believe he'll be a big star someday as a top heel.

MARK MADDEN: Steve Austin was really the only rookie of any note, but he's also a worthy winner. He has good psychology for such a newcomer and his work with Chris Adams was good. It should have been since Adams taught him, but there was no guarantee that it would be. Plus he was involved in one of the year's hottest feuds.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Steve Austin's poise on the stick and the mat was remarkable considering his experience. He's already better than a lot of guys who have been around forever.

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1. JIM CORNETTE (160)	1,304
2. Bobby Heenan (151)	1,223
3. Queen Sensational Sherri (81)	825
4. Theodore R. Long (34)	462
5. Paul E. Dangerously	106

Honorable Mention: Jimmy Hart 92

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1983 -	Jimmy Hart
1984 -	Jimmy Hart
1985 -	Jim Cornette
1986 -	Jim Cornette
1987 -	Jim Cornette
1988 -	Jim Cornette
1989 -	Jim Cornette

STEVE GERBER: Let's face it, Sherri Martel was the hardest worker on most of the cards she was on. She's bizarre. She's menacing and she's effective.

BILL STRONG: Teddy Long and Doom have been a pleasant surprise. Long really works the crowd well and his interviews are top-notch. His skits surrounding Doom's feud with the Horseman (on Flair's yacht and when Flair was abducted) were super.

TOM REESE: Although Sherri Martel lacks as an interview, her ringside work just can't be denied.

JEFF BOWDREN: Bobby Heenan isn't as quick as Jim Cornette and he's a whole lot staler, but he got the chance to show his stuff this year and Cornette didn't.

MARK MADDEN: They should call him James E. Houdini. He was hand cuffed and kept in a straight jacket almost all year, yet whenever he was given even an inch, he escaped and took a mile. His mic work during the Southern Boys vs. Master Blasters match at Halloween Havoc alone qualifies him for this award.

MYSTERY II: This was Bobby Heenan's best year. He was great as a commentator and great as a manager. His stuff was just incredible. He's the only man in wrestling that got me writing down mother insults.

MYSTERY I: Initially it was a mistake to convert Teddy Long into a manager since he was the best ref in wrestling. His only equal was Tommy Young, who deservedly commanded tremendous respect from wrestlers who appreciated a true pro who never got in their way. Even with the unfortunate premature retirement of Tommy Young, Teddy Long has been enough of a manager to cover the loss of two great referees.

JON KARESH: I couldn't give first choice to Jim Cornette because he was phased down all year. My first pick was Sherri because she is fun to watch and has a wicked-like intensity which is a nice change.

RICH SLOVARP: He isn't the best at ringside, but Bobby Heenan comes across as the most sarcastic, money-hungry person.

STEVE MAS: Bobby Heenan is really the best heel in the WWF. He gets across everything so well and is very important in getting the key issues over.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Jim Cornette's shadow-boxing bit with Nick Patrick at Wrestle War ranks up there with Lou Albano slipping on a meatball among the all-time classic managerial moments. The NWA's phase-out of Cornette was one of its biggest blunders of the year.

PAUL HANLIN: It's high time to recognize Sherri Martel as the WWF's hardest worker. Cornette gets second because he was held back too much by forces out of his control.

STEVE SIMS: Bobby Heenan should be number one but he doesn't work as hard at ringside as Sherri Martel. He does work smart, though. Jim Cornette did some innovative stuff this year but it seemed that a lot of the spots were designed to get himself over more than his team, the match, or his opponents and I didn't think that is what he should be doing.

JEFF COHEN: Bobby Heenan is such a presence as a manager that he makes every other WWF manager appear superfluous.

BEST TELEVISION ANNOUNCER

1. JIM ROSS (322)	1,795
2. Tony Schiavone (10)	408
3. Vince McMahon (18)	338
4. Lance Russell (12)	331
5. Dr. Alfonso Morales (13)	252



Jim Ross Interviewing Terry Funk

Honorable Mention: Chris Cruise 144, Gorilla Monsoon 98, Bob Caudle 42

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1981 -	Gordon Solie
1982 -	Gordon Solie
1983 -	Gordon Solie
1984 -	Lance Russell
1985 -	Lance Russell
1986 -	Lance Russell
1987 -	Lance Russell
1988 -	Jim Ross
1989 -	Jim Ross

STEVE GERBER: Nobody is even close to Jim Ross.

JEFF COHEN: Jim Ross is so good that he makes those who announce with him better through osmosis. Many times Ross is the only person preventing the NWA television from being as bad as AWA telecasts.

DAN LENNARD: Jim Ross is No. 1. He treats the fans with more respect and is more knowledgeable about the business than anyone else.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Jim Ross is the obvious first place choice but for second I went with Don Coss, who is becoming to Portland what Lance Russell used to be for Memphis.

CLINT FREEMAN: Of all the NWA hosts, Bob Caudle most recalls the glory days of Jim Crockett's Mid Atlantic Wrestling. He sports a just-folks, country wisdom that is also worn well by Gordon Solie.

MYSTERY II: Jim Ross has been great this year again. Not as great as last year, but still very good. He'll hold this award for a LONG time.

BILL STRONG: I feel sorry for Jim Ross because I feel that he would be very well suited to be a college football analyst. As a pro wrestling announcer, he'll never get the chance to work real sports.

JOHN MCADAM: I honestly can't imagine anyone not voting for Jim Ross unless they are trying to be different. No other announcer is in his league, period.

JEFF BOWDREN: Jim Ross is the best play-by-play guy ever and gets the angles over great, but he shouldn't try to win line of the week every week.

JOHN JANCE: For all of you critics out there of Gorilla Monsoon, "Give me a break." He reminds me so much of Oliver Hardy — the straight man to the comic foil who is hardly more intelligent than the person he's constantly putting down. Though he's as obnoxious as anyone in the wrestling business can ever be, there's something very comfortable in watching him refer to some hapless villain as a "piece of garbage," and noting weekly that Bobby Heenan "doesn't have a clue" while lurching his head back in his all-knowing manner. Teamed with Heenan, Monsoon is at his ever-shilling finest — a perfect blend of comedy and commentary. And how many viewers can watch with a straight face as he blows away Buddy Rose as a "big, fat out of shape slob."

STEVE SIMS: History, legitimacy, family, a classic style, you don't even have to speak Spanish to know that Dr. Alfonso Morales is that good, just like you don't have to understand Lucha Libre to realize Negro Casas is a great worker. Jim Ross is very good but I think he should sell the holds more and sell his own comedy less during the matches.

MARK MADDEN: You should name this award after Jim Ross. He's the only exceptional announcer in wrestling.

TOM REESE: Jim Ross always makes a match interesting by bringing up key and interesting points. He has the ability to make a match seem better than it really is. Vince McMahon is the same way but he's nowhere near as good as Ross.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Jim Ross has earned his rep as wrestling's best and his work this year stayed at a high level. He is one of the few who can artfully blend factual knowledge and be entertaining at the same time.

STEVE GENARRELLI: Jim Ross didn't have the calibre of matches to call as he did in 1989, but he's still the standard for announcing that everyone else is judged by.

WORST TELEVISION ANNOUNCER

1. HERB ABRAMS (149)	1,007
2. Gorilla Monsoon (66)	602
3. Ed Whelan (67)	524
4. Lord Al Hayes (44)	421
5. Vince McMahon (54)	411

Honorable Mention: J.C. Carson 280, Gordon Solie 211, Bob Caudle 198, Marc Lowrance 174, Sean Mooney 106, Ralph Strangis 101

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 -	Angelo Mosca
1985 -	Gorilla Monsoon
1986 -	David Crockett
1987 -	David Crockett
1988 -	David Crockett
1989 -	Ed Whalen

STEVE GENARRELLI: Herb Abrams is a less professionally sounding version of David Crockett.

TOM REESE: Lord Al Hayes' face-heel thing wouldn't be so bad if he was good at either of them. But he's pathetic at both.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: You know Jim, I was just gonna say that. He's so big, strong and powerful. And you know what else, Jim? He's so quick, fast and agile. And you know what else, Dave, he's so repetitive, redundant and regurgitative. This is in a nutshell, Bob Caudle's dialogue in a two-hour WCW telecast.

MYSTERY II: I thought for sure that nobody could ever be worse than Gordon Solie, but then the UWF came along and Solie was saved. Herb Abrams is so bad he makes Hillbilly Jim look like Jim Ross.

MYSTERY I: Can someone please turn on the cold shower, kiss this one good-bye, cut the intensity, the atmosphere or the electricity with a knife and perpetually send Magilla Gorilla into next week so we'd never here him again.

RICH SLOVARP: If everyone who voted in this poll had just one chance to see Southeastern Championship Wrestling, J.C. Carson would win this award in a landslide.

WILL DUNHAM: There's just something intangible about Bob Caudle that elevates him from a mediocre journeyman announcer to one of the most annoying presences.

SAM NORD: Ed Whalen's announcing makes an already horrible wrestling show even worse.

JOHN JANCE: Just as Lance Russell is my all-time favorite, picking Mr. Senile for this spot is a habit. He is so full of himself and repeats the same worthless and non-applicable cliches over and over again. Sure he seems impressive the first time you hear him in comparison to other announcers and of course he has a great reputation, but there is no substance to it. And may I say, he was much to grim on his interviews, especially at the Halloween Havoc PPV show. His attempts at seriousness are negated by the preponderance of overused cliches. Solie is forever No. 1. Indeed! No question about that!

TODD STUTTS: Suffice to say that Herb Abrams makes David Crockett look like Jim Ross. He's a fingernail on the chalkboard of life.

MARK MADDEN: Marc Lowrance really stinks, even in the confines of the USWA. Of course, if Ed Whalen were still working in any sort of prominence, he'd make Lowrance look like Keith Jackson. I saw Whalen on a CNWA show while vacationing in Toronto and I packed my bags and went home three days early.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Every announcer is by nature a shill for the promotion, but Vince McMahon is the most offensive shill of them all. If he had been born 100 years ago, he would be a carnival barker selling tickets to see the Elephant Man. In fact, Vince would try to change the poor fellow's gimmick.

CATEGORY B — WINNERS JUDGED BY MOST FIRST PLACE VOTES

BEST MAJOR WRESTLING CARD

1. U.S. AND JAPAN WRESTLING SUMMIT 4/13 Tokyo	110
2. WCW Great American Bash 7/8 Baltimore	78
3. WCW Starrcade '89 12/13/89 Atlanta	65
4. Combined Tokyo Dome 2/10	55
5. WWF Wrestlemania VI 4/1 Toronto	43

Honorable Mention: WCW Halloween Havoc 10/27 Chicago 42, WCW Wrestle War '90 2/25 Greensboro 29, New Japan 11/1 Tokyo Budokan Hall 25

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1989 — NWA Baltimore Bash 7/23

PAUL HANLIN: The first time in 11 years that All Japan and New Japan's feud ceased. The sheer numbers from the 2/10 Tokyo Dome show speak for themselves. And what took place between the ropes wasn't bad, either.

ALEX MARVEZ: Starrcade '89 was fantastic from start-to-finish. Even the "Bowling for Dollars" scoreboard couldn't ruin this show.

JOHN MCADAM: I know a lot of people didn't like Starrcade '89, but I thought it was the best. The singles tournament was thrilling, well booked and the final match was a classic. The best part of the show is that from start to finish they treated the show seriously, instead of like it was a carnival show.

JON KARESH: The combined All Japan, New Japan and WWF card at the Tokyo Dome because it was such a shock three promotions could work together and it also showed the country of Japan just how few good workers the WWF really had.

STEVE SIMS: The card of the year is the one that has the best matches, which is why I picked the New Japan 11/1 card at Budokan Hall in Tokyo.

STEVE MAS: The 2/10 Tokyo Dome. Lots of good to very good matches, great heat, a sellout crowd plus the significance of the two groups working together.

MARK MADDEN: The Great American Bash in Baltimore was a professionally produced show that was excellent live.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: The Baltimore Bash was the best. You had some excellent matches including one match of the year candidate and a world title change. I've been in a lot of Hogan-filled buildings but the pop Sting got after getting the title was the loudest I've ever heard at a wrestling match.

CLINT FREEMAN: The NWA's 8/24 show at the Meadowlands had the air of a major event, with the Steiners U.S. tag team title win over the Midnight Express, Ric Flair's one-man show with a dizzy Sting, and Stan Hansen's brawl with Terry Taylor.

SAM NORD: I picked the Great American Bash over Wrestlemania because the Bash had several good matches, while Wrestlemania's excitement was based on the drama of just one match.

MYSTERY I: Starrcade '89 was the Swan-song of the NWA closing out a great big show year. We were so spoiled by the long, well-worked classic matches of 1989 that too many of us were not receptive to this great tournament which overall featured great wrestling even though some of the matches were

sloppily rushed. Starrcade came too fast after too many great shows for our own good.

TERESA DEMARIE: While Wrestlemania was enjoyable and a lot better than expected, the NWA delivers the better wrestling shows and with a major title change and several good matches underneath, the Bash takes it.

MYSTERY II: Capital Combat had only three matches below three stars in my book. I wish every show was that good. The Bash was a close second but it didn't have as many good matches.

DAN LENNARD: It wasn't a good year for major cards, but Starrcade '89 stands out as the best of an average bunch.

STEVE GENNARELLI: The 4/13 Tokyo Dome card worked well on different levels. Unique matchups, intriguing fan reaction and good work rate and Wrestlemania style grandeur made this an easy choice.

WORST MAJOR WRESTLING CARD

1. WCW CLASH XIII 11/20 JACKSONVILLE	222
2. WWF Summer Slam 8/27 Philadelphia	36
3. WCW Capital Combat 5/19 Washington	31
4. WWF Wrestlemania 4/1 Toronto	30
5. WWF Survivor Series 11/22 Hartford	20

Honorable Mention: WWF Royal Rumble 18 1/21 Orlando, WCW Clash XII 9/5 Asheville 12

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1989 — WWF Wrestlemania 4/2 Atlantic City

ANDY STOWELL: The Capital Combat PPV show. Because of this card I nearly stopped watching the NWA for good.

JOHN MCADAM: Clash XIII was a farce that I'm sure turned some people off to the NWA forever.

TOM REESE: Just when you thought things couldn't get any worse the NWA presented Clash XIII. Words couldn't even describe how bad that was.

CHRIS ZAVISA: One match on the 11/20 Clash from Jacksonville was the worst match ever on a Clash. Two others would have been in the running for worst match of the year. Most of the wrestlers didn't belong anywhere near an NWA arena. Clash specials aren't supposed to be the quality of a PPV show, but this atrocity was the promotion's low point.

MARK MADDEN: Clash XIII from Jacksonville was almost as if Ole Anderson and Jim Herd decided to see how bad a card they could get away with having. Well, Ole didn't get away with it, did he?

STEVE SIMS: The card from hell (well, it was really from Jacksonville but you can go through a door from there to get to hell) wins this one.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Not even Ginger Lynn and Traci Lords could have resuscitated Summer Slam. A dreadful Brother Love segment to an Ultimate Warrior-Rick Rude match which should have been much better considering how much they had worked together the previous few months gives it the award.

RICH SLOVARP: After watching Clash XIII, I think everyone found out what a fifth-rate imitation of the WWF looks like.

JON KARESH: Clash XIII represented the NWA at its all-time lowest point. Cheap, green musclebound stiffs being trotted out one-after-the-other, and frequently prevailing over better wrestlers. The Herd-Anderson regime turned its back on everything the company was built on and attempted to become a third-rate imitation of Titan Sports. What the NWA somehow didn't understand was that if people wanted to watch big stiffs, they can simply turn to Titan Sports, where the production is slicker, the wrestlers are better known and the budget is greater. I can't tell you how discouraged I felt watching this show. It's like the regime decided, "Well, we've alienated everyone but the brain-dead morons and the hardcores, so let's drive out the hardcores."

TERESA DEMARIE: No Holds Barred was the single most useless PPV event of all-time. That the match was so bad and the movie even worse makes you wonder if "There's a sucker born every minute" is the WWF motto.

CLINT FREEMAN: Halloween Havoc was the worst because out of all the stinkers, this was the only one that didn't have a Ric Flair singles match to save it. The dismal Clash XIII still had Ric Flair's display with Butch Reed.

ERNIE SANTILLI: No Holds Barred was a lousy movie which could have been rented in a video store for a few bucks, followed it with a bland match and then spent a half hour claiming the cable companies were the greedy ones.

DAN LENNARD: With some of the finest wrestlers in the world on the card, you would think Titan could at least put on a decent Wrestlemania. But this year's was a real turkey.

PAUL HANLIN: The Capital Combat show wrecked the hair vs. hair, country whipping and steel cage gimmicks all in one memorable evening.

BEST WRESTLING MOVE

1. SCOTT STEINER'S FRANKENSTEINER 168
2. Jushin Riger's shooting star press 97
3. Yoshihiro Asai's moonsault out of ring 89
4. Steiner brothers top rope DDT 50
5. Jushin Riger's dive with flip out of ring 28

Honorable Mention: Super Astro's headfirst dive onto the floor 27, Power & Glory powerplex 14, Steiners top rope bulldog 12

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1981 - Jimmy Snuka's Superfly splash
- 1982 - Super Destroyer (Scott Irwin)'s superplex
- 1983 - Jimmy Snuka's Superfly splash
- 1984 - Davey Boy Smith's power clean in combination with Dynamite Kid's dropkick off the top ropes
- 1985 - Tiger Mask's (Mitsuharu Misawa) dive, with a mid-air flip, outside the ring
- 1986 - Chavo Guerrero's back flip flying body press
- 1987 - Keiichi Yamada's shooting star press
- 1988 - Keiichi Yamada's shooting star press
- 1989 - Scott Steiner's Frankensteiner

TOM REESE: Jushin Riger's shooting star. The move is incredible. The fact that nobody else does it should tell you just how good a move it really is.

JOHN MUSE: Yoshihiro Asai's mid-rope moonsault out of the ring has to be seen to be believed. What makes this move so effective is that he can do it at anytime which adds the surprise element to the move.

MARK MADDEN: People are already starting to duplicate the Frankensteiner. Let's see someone duplicate Asai's moonsault out of the ring.

ERNIE SANTILLI: The Frankensteiner is a pure athletic marvel, however the DDT off the top rope hurts just to watch and gets my vote. Where do they find guys to take this move? They must tap the suicide hot line.

JOHN JANCE: The Frankensteiner is so fast and even more awesome in watching a guy the size of Scott Steiner pulling it off.

RICH SLOVARP: I've had friends who hate wrestling look in awe at Yoshihiro Asai's mid rope moonsault out of the ring.

Scott Steiner



MOST DISGUSTING PROMOTIONAL TACTIC

1. ATSUSHI ONITA STABBING ANGLE WITH JOSE GONZALES 325
2. WCW racism angle 22
3. Black Scorpion angle 18
4. Hulk Hogan summer injury angle 15
5. Gobbledy Gooker 11
- WWF Slaughter/Adnon Iraq angle 11

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1981 - Usage of "The Monster" and saying he was built in a laboratory in Transylvania by LeBelle promotion
- 1982 - Bob Backlund as WWF champion
- 1983 - Pretending Eddie Gilbert had re-injured his neck after original injury took place in auto accident by WWF
- 1984 - Blackjack Mulligan faking heart attack in Florida by Championship Wrestling from Florida
- 1985 - Usage of Mike Von Erich's near fatal illness to sell Cotton Bowl tickets by World Class
- 1986 - Equating an angle of Chris Adams' blindness with the death of Gino Hernandez by World Class
- 1987 - World Class handling of Mike Von Erich's death
- 1988 - Fritz Von Erich's brush with death
- 1989 - Jose Gonzales' baby face push

ANDY STOWELL: NWA pushing the racism angle with Junkyard Dog. What makes this worse than the Onita angle is that Onita was going for a big money feud, while WCW was just wasting away waiting for Sting to get back. Bad taste, bad wrestling and just a bad angle.

DAN LENNARD: Atsushi Onita and Jose Gonzales set new ground in lows. Onita's only saving grace was that he aborted the angle before he got lynched by the Japanese fans and press. This wasn't only the most disgusting promotional tactic of 1990, but of the entire 20th century.

TERESA DEMARIE: The Onita angle with Gonzales. Another sobering reminder that pro wrestling is often simply grotesque burlesque rather than sports entertainment.

MYSTERY MAN II: Robocop — the mixing of pro wrestling and science fiction just doesn't work. Robocop was stupid because of the premise. Black Scorpion wasn't all that bad of an idea but making him do magic tricks was beyond insulting not only to the wrestlers but also to magicians everywhere. The only reason I didn't vote for Onita is because he didn't follow through with the angle.

MYSTERY MAN I: This was a strong category this year. There was the Onita/Gonzales angle and Juicer being portrayed as a kids hero, but the blinding of Jake Roberts irked me most. I've witnessed someone's sight deteriorate over the years due to a combination of diabetes and aging. Riding public transportation I see the blind, their eye dogs and canes frequently. If the skit itself wasn't base enough, the motives behind this shortsighted story line went way beyond pro wrestling's sordid standards. When kids ask me, "Is Jake really blind in that eye?" I respond in monotone, "No. He had to go to court because last year he beat up a guy badly in a real fight when he wasn't wrestling. He needed some time away from the WWF to straighten out his court problems." Since the WWF is great at pretending people have never existed in the first place, Roberts could have been momentarily phased out quietly, then brought back at anytime with no impact on fan interest or house show attendance. What an insensitive mind at Titan that conceived of the "arrogance" angle and the alleged business reasons behind it, setting up of a new feud while one of the boys is temporarily indisposed. My only question to Mr. Aurelian Smith Jr. is "under the exact same set of circumstances, would you have still opted to use your fists to settle a difference of opinion with either Haku or Dr. Death had either of them been in the car with you that night in Florida instead of a 160 pound guy?"

PAUL SHERMAN: The NWA racism angle. It was pathetic to see a group of white executives decide that the role model for blacks should be Junkyard Dog. How inspirational. This was at a time when those same white executives were pushing a team that came to the ring with a Confederate flag as baby faces.

JON KARESH: Fritz Von Erich could scheme, think and ponder for years and not even come up with an angle near as disgusting as the one Atsushi Onita came up with. I'm convinced there will not be a more disgusting and sick angle in wrestling for the next 30 years. Maybe this is the last year you should have this category, because its zenith has been reached.

ERNIE SANTILLI: The Gonzales stabbing angle established an all-time low as to how far this business will stoop to pick up a dollar. Fake heart attacks, hands in the toilet are lightweight compared to exploiting a murder. What will they try next? Have a masked man claiming to be the ghost of Bruiser Brody attack Gonzales with a machete?

BETSY SHERMAN: The racist angle in the NWA setting up the idea of whether or not JYD would be the first black world champion when obviously it was never going to happen. Then putting Rocky King in a clownish shuck-and-jive role. I resented terribly that my favorite heels, Ric Flair, Jim Cornette and Arn Anderson were using racial slurs. An offshoot of this period was that the articulate Teddy Long seemed to have been lobotomized. Since then, in his interviews, all he does is make references to black celebrities.

MARK MADDEN: What's next for Onita and Gonzales? Jesus vs. Judas in a loser-goes-to-hell match with a freshly turned Virgin Mary in Judas' corner? This angle made Gilbert and Lawler look like a drivers ed flick.

JOHN MUSE: It's a slap in the face that Jose Gonzales would take part in that angle with Atsushi Onita. Onita had to be one sick puppy to come up with the idea but I can't think of any words to describe Gonzales.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Nothing comes close to taking the reality of a brutal death and making it into an angle. Is Jose Gonzales so sick that he's using his "fame" as a selling point? How Onita nearly went with it is almost even more disturbing.

CHRIS ZAVISA: The Onita being stabbed by Gonzales angle was the lowest anyone sank this year, or maybe any year in recent history. Thankfully Onita was talked out of continuing it before it dealt the promotion a more serious setback.

JOHN MCADAM: Definitely the Horsemen vs. Junkyard Dog and Rocky King racial stuff. I can't believe that Ted Turner, Jim Herd, Ole Anderson or any semi-sensible individual would allow that kind of crap to be passed off as entertainment.

BEST COLOR COMMENTATOR

1. JESSE VENTURA	171
2. Paul E. Dangerously	75
3. Jim Cornette	41
4. Dutch Mantell	33
5. Freebirds	32

Honorable Mention: Roddy Piper 26, Bobby Heenan 20, Jerry Lawler 19

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1986 -	Michael Hayes
1987 -	Jesse Ventura
1988 -	Jesse Ventura
1989 -	Jesse Ventura

BILL STRONG: The Freebirds are under-appreciated as color commentators. Lance Russell sets them up well to do their comedy and they do a good job of putting the weak WCW angles over. They are totally entertaining, whether they are making fun of Lance's girlfriends or in Hollywood with their fans. The skit in Hollywood with Russell's "insurance investigator friend shooting the Birds impostors" was television at its finest.

JOHN MCADAM: This year Jerry Lawler added a new dimension to the color commentator role. He actually policed the television show from that spot. He would liven up an interview that was going nowhere by interjecting himself into it. He clarified angles that Dave Brown didn't fully explain. And who could forget that brain damaged remark he made as Kerry Von Erich kept looking at the wrong camera.

JON KARESH: I would give the award to Paul E. Dangerously just based on his PPV stints with Jim Ross. His line about Gordon Solie covering wrestling for thousands of years makes my vote for comment of the year. An honorable mention to Roddy Piper who has surprisingly filled the almost unfillable shoes of Jesse Ventura.

JOHN JANCE: Paul E. Dangerously, a former Roddy Piper wannabe has now surpassed his target. Somehow I can't imagine him shilling for the Gobbledy Gooker. Even if Jim Cornette and Jesse Ventura had been doing this all year, Paul E. still would have held his own.

TERESA DEMARIE: Give Roddy Piper credit, he took over for the unreplaceable Jesse Ventura and didn't miss a step. He plays an almost impossible role as a baby face color commentator working with Vince McMahon and comes off great. He doesn't have Ventura's voice, but his wit is better and he's more enthusiastic about what he's calling and reveals a lot more than Ventura ever did.

MARK MADDEN: Paul E. Dangerously sparked at Halloween Havoc, adding just the right touch of insanity to go with Jim Ross' professionalism.

TOM REESE: Now that Jesse Ventura is out of wrestling, you can really appreciate just how good he was.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Hands down to Jim Cornette. He always provided a differing viewpoint than Jim Ross, yet meshed with him perfectly. The NWA had better hope they can work something out with him in the future, because he's the best in the business.

DAN LENNARD: Jim Cornette is consistently entertaining and informative. His one-liners are so quick sometimes that I've got to re-wind the tape to catch them.

STRONGEST WRESTLER

1. STEVE WILLIAMS	237
2. Doug Furnas	41
3. Legion of Doom Animal	20
4. Rick Steiner	16
5. Davey Boy Smith	7

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1981 - Tony Atlas
1982 - Ken Patera
1983 - Hulk Hogan
1984 - Butch Reed
1985 - Road Warrior Animal
1986 - Road Warrior Animal
1987 - Steve Williams
1988 - Steve Williams
1989 - Steve Williams

ERNIE SANTILLI: Useless trivia buffs may wish to note that Steve Williams has the same initials as Strongest Wrestler. Isn't it a fascinating world in which we live?

READERS' FAVORITE WRESTLER

1. RIC FLAIR	143
2. Jushin Riger	107
3. Scott Steiner	34
4. Terry Funk	23
5. Kenta Kobashi	13
Bobby Eaton	13

Honorable Mention: Negro Casas 12, Mr. Perfect 11, Randy Savage 10

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - Ric Flair
1985 - Ric Flair
1986 - Ric Flair
1987 - Ric Flair
1988 - Ric Flair
1989 - Ric Flair

READERS' MOST HATED WRESTLER

1. ULTIMATE WARRIOR	117
2. Dusty Rhodes	51
3. Dino Bravo	50
4. Jose Gonzales	45
5. Junkyard Dog	42

Honorable Mention: Hulk Hogan 31, Jim Duggan 21, Earthquake 18, Sid Vicious 15, Sgt. Slaughter 14

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - Ivan Putski
1985 - Hulk Hogan
1986 - Hulk Hogan
1987 - Dusty Rhodes
1988 - Dusty Rhodes
1989 - Ultimate Warrior

WORST WRESTLER

1. JUNKYARD DOG	145
2. Sid Vicious	38
3. Andre the Giant	31
4. Tugboat	27
5. Ultimate Warrior	24

Honorable Mention: Earthquake 22, Dino Bravo 15, Giant Baba 12, Tiger Jeet Singh 11, Dusty Rhodes 11

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - Ivan Putski
1985 - Uncle Elmer (Stan Frazier)
1986 - Mike Von Erich
1987 - Junkfood Dog
1988 - Anabolic Warrior
1989 - Andre the Giant

ANDY STOWELL: Kerry Von Erich couldn't even have a good match with the best wrestler in the federation.

TOM REESE: If I had the opportunity to work in main events in a national company, I would take advantage of my opportunity to be the best wrestler I could be. Instead, Junkyard Dog only got worse.

JOHN MCADAM: If the 1989 yearbook, I said that there was no such thing as a bad Ric Flair match. In 1990, Junkyard Dog proved me wrong.

RICH SLOVARP: Sid Vicious gets this award for one reason. While the Ultimate Warrior can be carried to having good matches, I've yet to see Sid Vicious in a good match and we all saw how hopeless it was for Bobby Eaton to try.

JOHN JANCE: It's absolutely amazing that someone who was fired for laziness and no-shows would be so desirable to work for the same promotion one year later, and that Junkyard Dog would reward the NWA's faith in him with an array of horrible matches the likes of which have rarely been seen on such a consistent basis. How many other wrestlers have been able to make Ric Flair unbearable to watch? How many other performers look like they absolutely could care less about what they do in the ring and display the attitude so flagrantly?

STEVE SIMS: Andre the Giant couldn't even do an elbow drop when he came back for the tag team tournament. His was the single worst finishing move I've ever seen.

MARK MADDEN: Giant Baba is a great promoter but to call him a corpse with skin stretched over the bones is unfair. I think a corpse with skin stretched over the bones could work better. Put he against JFD and the ring posts might collapse out of sheer humiliation.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: The worst, if you take into account his push, is the Ultimate Warrior. If huffing and puffing are that wares that make a champion, then wake me up from the sleeper hold.

JOHN MUSE: Junkfood Dog is beyond the worst wrestler. When Ric Flair can't even carry someone to a decent match, it's time to give it up.

TODD STUTTS: Smart fans don't care about the Junkyard Dog. Casual fans don't care about the Junkyard Dog. So why did the NWA push him as a main eventer?

WORST TAG TEAM

1. GIANT BABA & ANDRE THE GIANT	130
2. Master Blasters	92

3. Bushwhackers	65
4. Rhythm & Blues	20
5. Bolsheviks	19

Honorable Mention: Freebirds 16, Earthquake & Dino Bravo 16, Butch Masters & Skywalker Nitron 13

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - The Crusher & Baron Von Raschke
1985 - Uncle Elmer & Cousin Junior
1986 - Junkfood Dog & George Steele
1987 - Jimmy Valiant & Bugsy McGraw
1988 - Bolsheviks (Nikolai Volkoff & Boris Zhukov)
1989 - Powers of Pain (Warlord & The Barbarian)

PAUL HANLIN: There are teams that just plain stink, there are teams that just make you laugh and there are teams that get pushed for no logical reason. And then there's Ole Anderson and Jim Herd — the Atlanta Assassins. What their predecessors started, they just about finished. The near total destruction of the NWA.

WILL DUNHAM: All the Road Warrior rip-offs have been terrible but the Master Blasters were embarrassing since their debut. Only hard work, patience or perhaps massive quantities of mind-altering substances administered to fans can make watching these two bearable.

RICH SLOVARP: When you have two wrestlers who have no right to be called wrestlers like Giant Baba & Andre the Giant, it made this award the easiest one to pick a winner in.

STEVE SIMS: The best promoter in wrestling would never let a tag team like Andre the Giant & Giant Baba wrestle unless he wasn't so close with one of the members of the team.

ERNIE SANTILLI: The original Master Blasters, although the tall one is okay for a rookie, what the world doesn't need is another Road Warrior clone combination. I don't recall ever seeing Hawk or Animal miss a head-butt by a yard either.

JOHN JANCE: Years ago, the name "Freebirds" conjured images of the wildest, most inventive tag team of the future, with three very divergent styles meshing into an interesting tag team. I'm selecting them this year because every time I see the decline of Michael Hayes and how out-of-place and useless Jimmy Garvin is, it's a sad sight. Add to this unpleasant mixture, Oldie Anderson's obsession with washed-up blacks by throwing in Little Richard Marley made it that much worse.

WORST TELEVISION SHOW

1. AWA ON ESPN	110
2. ICW Wrestling	75
3. CNWA	40
4. Herb Abrams' UWF	31
5. Windy City Wrestling	29

Honorable Mention: IWA 28, NWA World Wide Wrestling 25, WWF Prime Time Wrestling 23, WWF All-American Wrestling 16, WWF Wrestling Challenge 11, WWF Superstars of Wrestling 10

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - WWF All-Star Wrestling
1985 - Championship Wrestling from Florida
1986 - California Championship Wrestling
1987 - World Class Championship Wrestling
1988 - AWA on ESPN
1989 - ICW Wrestling

JOHN MCADAM: AWA All-Star Wrestling. Why does everyone think that Verne Gagne is a bad guy? I have it on good authority that the only reason he makes the AWA show so bad is so nobody will miss it when it's gone.

RICH SLOVARP: All-American Wrestling is just a bunch of rerun matches from Wrestling Challenge and Superstars. The only thing original is Hillbilly Jim and Gene Okerlund, and that isn't a plus.

JON KARESH: NWA World Wide Wrestling, not just because it's a boring television show. It's not because there are no new angles. It is because the show is a miserable failure in its most critical function — promoting the house shows in the local markets. Where are the localized interviews? Where are the interviews, period? Almost as bad was it's obvious the show is always one or two weeks behind. For example, the World Wide show the week after Starrcade didn't even mention the event. This showed even the most inattentive viewer that they were watching an outdated show.

JEFF BOWDREN: The Saturday TBS show hasn't been this bad, this disjointed and had such terrible workers pushed since 1984 when...Hey! What a coincidence!...Ole Anderson was the booker.

SAM NORD: The CNWA is almost as entertaining as watching the Home Shopping Club.

STEVE SIMS: Since the WWF produces weekly comedy/vaudeville shows with wrestling as the backdrop theme, it shouldn't be eligible for this award. But what's there to say about Windy City?

WORST MANAGER

1. MR. FUJI	176
2. General Adnon	34
3. Slick	27
4. Jimmy Hart	20
5. Little Richard Marley	19

Honorable Mention: Percy Pringle 18, Sapphire 17, Ox Baker 12, Theodore R. Long 12, Woman 10

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - Mr. Fuji
1985 - Mr. Fuji
1986 - Paul Jones
1987 - Mr. Fuji
1988 - Mr. Fuji
1989 - Mr. Fuji

CHRIS ZAVISA: The winner of the annual Mr. Fuji award? What a surprise, Mr. Fuji.

DAN LENNARD: Mr. Fuji is still hopeless after all these years. He has added nothing to the Orient Express, and now they've handed Demolition back to him to ruin.

MARK MADDEN: Ox Baker was a bad manager, but at least his protege was a great worker.

JOHN JANCE: Sheik Adnon's act was lousy in the AWA. Teaming him with someone as washed-up as Sgt. Slaughter has magnified how small time he really is. He's even more disgusting to watch because they are taking advantage of what could be a war. Besides, he's so bad he makes me forget that Sapphire ever existed. So I guess I should be thankful.

JON KARESH: I could never figure out Sapphire's purpose. Her heel turn was botched by not having her do the obvious

angle of suddenly interfering and costing Dusty Rhodes to lose. Then she was quickly forgotten.

WORST MATCH OF THE YEAR

1. SID VICIOUS VS. NIGHT STALKER	
11/20 Jacksonville	220
2. Master Blasters vs. Brad Armstrong & Tim Horner	
9/5 Asheville	21
3. Ric Flair vs. Junkyard Dog 6/18 Columbia	13
4. Giant Baba & Andre the Giant vs. Butch Masters & Nitron	
11/25 Yokohama	12
5. Giant Baba & Andre the Giant vs. Demolition	
4/13 Tokyo	9

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1984 - Fabulous Moolah vs. Wendi Richter from Madison Square Garden
1985 - Fred Blassie vs. Lou Albano from Nassau Coliseum
1986 - Roddy Piper vs. Mr. T boxing match from Nassau Coliseum 4/2
1987 - Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant 3/29 Pontiac
1988 - Hiroshi Wajima vs. Tom Magee 4/21 Kawasaki
1989 - Andre the Giant vs. Ultimate Warrior 10/31 Topeka

JEFF COHEN: Asking Sid Vicious to carry an opponent shows just how far gone Ole Anderson was before the ax fell.

ALEX MARVEZ: I've never been more embarrassed to be a wrestling fan (except when Ultimate Warrior is on television) than after seeing the Sid Vicious vs. Night Stalker match live. To make it worse, the finish made no sense.

MYSTERY II: Sid Vicious and Night Stalker made GLOW wrestling look like Flair vs. Steamboat.

JOHN JANCE: Col. Deklerk & Sgt. Kruger vs. Botswana Beast & Kaluha. How bad was this? Nobody cared about this match; in fact, nobody cared about the Pat O'Connor tournament, if anyone did, they would have spelled O'Connor's name right; Nothing was known about the participants in setting up the match; the shilling for the four by the announcers was nauseating, considering we were watching a variety of poorly timed "moves" and lousy development; I know it's easy to pick Sid Vicious vs. Night Stalker but at least the crowd knew who Vicious was. The crowd was totally dead during this match. It was like watching a match with the sound off, except that Jim Ross kept telling us how great the competitors were every time they didn't screw up a move. The names were demeaning, racist and stupid to boot. Besides, isn't Kaluha a tropical liquor. This match did nothing to promote the upcoming tournament on the PPV. Wasn't that the purpose of the match? None of the four competitors could even find Africa on a map. Besides, why would anyone ever want to copy Col. DeBeers' gimmick, and then do it so badly.

RICH SLOVARP: The Sid Vicious vs. Night Stalker match reminded me of two guys who have watched wrestling on TV for about a month and after seeing how "easy" it looks, they try and wrestle each other on their lawn. No timing, no coordination and neither has a clue as to what to do.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Poor Ox Baker hit the daily double this year. Those who thought Sid Vicious vs. Night Stalker was a stinker should have watched Sgt. Slaughter vs. Russian Brute. The kicker is that ESPN aired the match twice. It sure made Home Run Derby look exciting, though.

TOM REESE: What do you expect when you book two stiffs like Sid Vicious and the Night Stalker? But to put a match like that on live television?

BILL STRONG: The Sid Vicious vs. Night Stalker match was so hideous that I turned off my television and missed the rest of the show. The Night Stalker didn't come off as imposing in the least, just a blown-up non-athlete. I was embarrassed to even be a wrestling fan after watching this match. Sid's baby face turn was also well orchestrated, wasn't it?

WORST FEUD

1. RIC FLAIR VS. JUNKYARD DOG	95
2. Nikolai Volkoff vs. Sgt. Slaughter	84
3. Sting vs. Black Scorpion	79
4. Nikolai Volkoff vs. Boris Zhukov	35
5. Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake	28

Honorable Mention: Dino Bravo vs. Tugboat 17, Bushwhackers vs. Rhythm & Blues 12

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1984 - Andre the Giant vs. John Studd
1985 - Sgt. Slaughter vs. Boris Zhukov
1986 - Machines (Andre the Giant & Bill Eadie) vs. King Kong Bundy & John Studd
1987 - George Steele vs. Danny Davis
1988 - Midnight Rider (Dusty Rhodes) vs. Tully Blanchard
1989 - Andre the Giant vs. Ultimate Warrior

TODD STUTTS: Everything about the Sgt. Slaughter-Nikolai Volkoff feud stinks. Extremely bad taste and even worse wrestling.

JOHN MUSE: Does anyone remember the Ric Flair vs. Junkfood Dog feud? What a way to waste Flair's talents. This feud had bad written all over it, bad angles, bad matches and bad taste. The NWA called it a stop-gap measure, but stop-gap would have been more appropriate.

RICH SLOVARP: Ric Flair vs. Junkyard Dog not only for the racial crap but because it was the worst possible use of Flair.

STEVE SIMS: Tugboat as Hulk Hogan's surrogate against Earthquake was the biggest flop around the world this year except for Eastern European Communism. For the amount of push that it got, it didn't even draw good flies.

ERNIE SANTILLI: There were many feuds worse as far as wrestling goes, but Sting vs. Black Scorpion took a good concept, introduced it before Sting vs. Sid Vicious was resolved, made the new face champ appear to be everything but what he was supposed to be and degenerated to the point where the announcers had to come up with more alibis than Al Capone's lawyers to cover all the contradictions previously presented.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Sting vs. Black Scorpion was supposed to mean something but was ruined before it ever got started. Putting a dozen guys in the ring and letting Sting pin them all destroyed the whole gimmick. This was a textbook example of how not to book a gimmick.

MARK MADDEN: Okay, so none of the fans knew who the Black Scorpion was. But neither did the company. Tony Zane took the honorable way out and went to prison rather than involve himself with this fiasco. Of course, if this feud had a satisfactory conclusion, we'd be saying what a great feud it was. But instead it had a muddled, confusing, stupid end instead of having Steve Borden look at the lights to carry the feud to its logical end.

PATRICK JONES: Junkyard Dog vs. Ric Flair was set up by a racist angle, ruined the best wrestler in the world, sold no tickets and hurt the promotion in the long run.

T.J. BROWN: Seeing Nikolai Volkoff vs. Boris Zhukov go at it was worse than a "Golden Girls" fight scene. I saw one match so bad they were booing Volkoff when it was over because the fans were unimpressed by two statues taking turns hitting each other with boots.

WORST ON INTERVIEWS

1. ULTIMATE WARRIOR	174
2. Kerry Von Erich	63
3. Sting	25
4. Sid Vicious	19
5. Junkyard Dog	14

Honorable Mention: Dino Bravo 10

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1984 - Jimmy Snuka
1985 - Thunderbolt Patterson
1986 - Mike Von Erich
1987 - Bugsy McGraw
1988 - Steve Williams
1989 - Ultimate Warrior

STEVE GENARRELLI: Although Ultimate Warrior sounds like Bob Backlund tripping out on LSD, Earthquake's interviews have no redeeming social value.

TERESA DEMARIE: Jimmy Snuka is kept under wraps and although Kerry Von Erich can't say "Rowdy Roddy Piper" to save his life, it was Ultimate Warrior who did the longest bad interviews in wrestling history. You expect me to take a man seriously who talks to his arms?

ERNIE SANTILLI: It is I who shall come down from the powers above to feel the flame of fire flowing through all the little Warriors. I will not be denied that which the heavens are one in infinity glory. Does anyone understand what the hell Ultimate Warrior says?

MARK MADDEN: Even with a script Kerry Von Erich sounds mentally retarded. I'd rather see the guy on LA Law with Tourette's Syndrome do Kerry's interviews for him. At least he might call Mean Gene a funny name and get away with it.

JON KARESH: The Anabolic Warrior. Let's see: "Grrrr I.... see through da darkness my little warreors and all da foces of da universe say dat four score and seven years ago da powers of da earth and da night grrrrrrr and da sun god who sez to da warreor people bake 15 minutes and 350 degrees and da powerz of da heavens pause while I take many labored breaths and I see through the shimmering light dat da Hulkamaniacs pursuant to da party of da first part ipso facto and dey will never vestroy da warreor. I'm going to hunt a wabbit in da fawest and once all dea earth and da sky ryumble with forces dat dis is Baba wawa and da night and da cosmos all say marsiedots and dosiedotes and lettle lamseydivey."

WILL DUNHAM: If Jim Duggan didn't have xenophobia and phony patriotic monosyllabic utterings and the insipid "USA, USA" chant, he'd be voted the most silent wrestler.

WORST PROMOTION

1. AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION	144
2. World Championship Wrestling	83
3. World Wrestling Federation	52
4. International Championship Wrestling	47
5. World Class Championship Wrestling	46

Honorable Mention: CNWA 25, Abrams UWF 18, Georgia All-Star Wrestling 12, USWA 10

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1986 - AWA
1987 - World Class
1988 - AWA
1989 - AWA

STEVE GENARRELLI: Today's NWA is like last year's AWA, only with more credibility and more money to spend.

TODD STUTTS: The WWF continues to be an insult to my intelligence.

TOM REESE: The NWA paid for cheap talent and they turned it into a cheap promotion. Quite a turnaround from one year ago.

RICH SLOVARP: The CNWA. What can you say about a promotion that has gimmicks like The Bowlers, The Ballplayer and the announcing done by Ed Whalen? Yes, CNWA does deserve its title as the Can Not Wrestle Association.

JOHN MCADAM: I used to think it was physically impossible for men to have their heads stuck as far up their rectums as the NWA management did this year.

TERESA DEMARIE: I wonder if the Black Scorpion could make an entire front office disappear?

JOHN JANCE: The NWA for having the best talent in the U.S. and continuing to remain a weak No. 2 promotion and not even gain any ground against a struggling and stale WWF. Any promotion that would bury a popular and dedicated performer like Norman, and then explain his absence by saying that his father died, when he didn't, is so low class that sometimes I feel they're getting what they deserve.

PAUL HANLIN: What promotion promoted title matches on TV and made them non-title at the house shows, had the heel champ lose at the house show and everyone think the title has changed only to tell the fans otherwise? What group went out this year and hired every last has-been, never were's and never-will-be's? What group had every main event for the first six months of the year end with outside interference? What group hired a guy charged with rape who plea-bargained down as a baby face for kids? What group devalued the few genuine talents it had under contract?

STEVE SIMS: The WCW should have nearly caught up to Titan Sports by now but have had the most inept past 18 months of promotion I've ever seen. Not only do they make mistakes, everyone does, but they repeat those mistakes over and over again.

BEST BOOKER

1. SHOHEI BABA	225
2. Eddie Gilbert	93
3. McMahon/Patterson	41
4. Riki Choshu	40
5. Akira Maeda	14

Honorable Mention: Ric Flair 10

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1986 - Dusty Rhodes
1987 - Vince McMahon
1988 - Eddie Gilbert
1989 - Shohei Baba

Editors Note: Jeff Bowdren received enough votes for third place but there is a big difference between coming up with ideas and getting them implemented.

TODD STUTTS: Shohei Baba deserves it just for the fact that he gives the fans what they pay to see — clean finishes in every match.

DAN LENNARD: When you consider the talent roster he has, Eddie Gilbert is making the USWA very entertaining. If Jeff Bowdren was the NWA's booker, he would have won this award hands down, however.

ALEX MARVEZ: If more people in wrestling followed Shohei Baba's examples, maybe the wrestling business in the United States wouldn't be in the dismal shape it's in.

TOM REESE: Shohei Baba could have crumbled after Genichiro Tenryu left and everyone would have felt sorry for him. But he didn't. Instead, with the help of fresh young talent who were willing to put out every night, Baba's promotion got better.

MARK MADDEN: I judge a wrestling card primarily by its finishes. That's what people remember. Shohei Baba has the best finishes because they're all 1-2-3 in the middle. Since everyone does jobs, it's no big deal to do a job. Baba is a model booker at a time when pro wrestling booking is at an all-time low.

ANDY STOWELL: You have to hand it to Shohei Baba. It was the strength of his booking that saw him through all the defections this year. The most in tune booker to what the public wants.

PROMOTER OF THE YEAR

1. SHOHEI BABA 237
2. Vince McMahon 100
3. Akira Maeda 71
4. Antonio Inoki 47
5. Jerry Jarrett 14

Honorable Mention: Paco Alonso 12, Atsushi Onita 12, Gary Juster 11

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1988 — Vince McMahon
1989 — Akira Maeda

Editor's note: There was a major write-in campaign for a local promoter, however all but three or four of the votes came from people who weren't subscribers to the Observer.

MIKE OMANSKY: Vince McMahon still leaves all others in the dust. He knows his market, delivers angles that a four-year-old can understand and is willing to make changes when necessary.

TODD STUTTS: Shohei Baba wins because he promotes wrestlers and wrestling, and not a three-ring circus that calls itself pro wrestling.

JOHN MCADAM: I know that everyone hates him because of the Bruiser Brody angle he attempted, but let's be fair. Atsushi Onita deserves the award. To put together this successful of a promotion from scratch without any top talent is a real achievement and he deserves a lot of credit for it.

STEVE MAS: Shohei Baba runs the best wrestling promotion in the world. It may not be spectacular at times and the booking is conservative, but it is constantly good. It's always there, doing well, having a great main event, clean finishes and the problems that plague other promotions don't seem to ever get in the way. Even when his biggest star left the promotion kept doing well.

CHRIS ZAVISA: Shohei Baba should write a text book on how to properly run a wrestling promotion. How many other promotion's could lose their No. 1 star and get their TV time slot demoted and wind up the year stronger than when it started.

BEST GIMMICK

1. THE UNDERTAKER 106
2. Jushin Riger 59
3. Michael Wall Street 40
4. The Juicer 27
5. Black Scorpion 21

Honorable Mention: Big Van Vader 15

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1986 — Adrian Street
1987 — Ted DiBiase's Million Dollar Man
1988 — Varsity Club/Rick Steiner
1989 — Jushin Riger

BILL STRONG: When Mark Calaway entered the Hartford Civic Center on Thanksgiving night, he looked absolutely menacing. The kids in the row in front of me were fixed on him like they were watching a slasher flick. One of the kids turned to his dad and said something like, "This guy is going to kill Dusty Rhodes."

MARK MADDEN: I thought Michael Wall Street would suck, but the gimmick is hilarious. the computer gimmick isn't bad either and predicting times of finishes does get people paying attention to the match. The first time he gets anywhere near the predicted time there should be tons of heat. Alexandra York plays her role well and I'm sure we'll get to see her in some state of undress before the year is over. How about a Missy Hyatt vs. Alexandra York feud with the winner living with me for one year? How about the loser? I'm not picky.

WORST GIMMICK

1. GOBBLEDY GOOKER 73
2. Black Scorpion 72
3. Saba Simba 35
4. Master Blasters 28
5. Little Richard Marley 17

Honorable Mention: Tugboat 15, Michael Wall Street 14

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 1986 — "Adorable" Adrian Adonis
1987 — "Adorable" Adrian Adonis
1988 — Midnight Rider
1989 — Ding Dongs

STEVE GENNARELLI: The Black Scorpion was a good short-term angle. The problem is, they went with it for five months.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Listen to me Sting. I'm going to give you some stupid clues and I want you to try and remember me. Then I'm going to show you that I double as a fledgling magician. Then I'm going to get fired as booker and my voice is going to change. Still listening Sting. Then I'm going to be revealed as



Shohei Baba

someone who fits none of the clues, so the angle makes no sense to anybody.

TERESA DEMARIE: From the best to the worst in one year, Art Barr got a great gimmick from Roddy Piper and let it go to his head and totally ruined his career. I can't believe the NWA was stupid enough to push him as a kid's hero. Then again, after reading Jim Herd's remarks about the situation, I shouldn't be surprised.

MYSTERY II: When Tugboat was a little boy, he always wanted to be two things, a wrestler and a tugboat. Well, he sure ain't no wrestler and he's too fat to be a tugboat.

WILL DUNHAM: I was going to vote for the Gobbledy-Gooker just for the sheer stupidity of it after all the excellent build-up, but Saba Simba gets the nod because Tony Atlas' character is so offensive to African Americans.

KAREN SHEHORN: The Gobbledy Gooker. How could Hector Guerrero stoop so low for money?

MYSTERY I: Abracadabra! Watch me make all the fans disappear.

ERNIE SANTILLI: This year's in one week and out the other trophy (The Ding Dong award) goes to The Pearl. It was a ridiculous attempt to pass Ranger Ross off as Muta under a hood and body stocking. If they had hung onto the original and used him right, they would have had a major star instead of a fraud to push. This should have been called "Faux Pearl."

MOST EMBARRASSING WRESTLER

1. DUSTY RHODES	73
2. Junkyard Dog	39
3. Ultimate Warrior	30
4. Saba Simba	25
5. Little Richard Marley	23

Honorable Mention: Gobbledy Gooker 18, Trucker Norm 17, Earthquake 16, Andre the Giant 15, Buddy Rose 14

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1986 - Adrian Adonis
1987 - George Steele
1988 - George Steele
1989 - Andre the Giant

DAN LENNARD: Lanny Poffo's development of his persona this year wound up as a truly offensive and degrading gay stereotype. When I first saw him on the screen, I cringed. Gay Rights should have fire-bombed Titan's offices for such a reactionary and out-of-date characterization.

ERNIE SANTILLI: Could there have been anything more embarrassing than Tugboat, a very full grown man in a Huey, Dewey and Louie outfit holding a doll and throwing bracelets to young boys? Yes, Rocky King doing a "shuck and jive" routine should have had Dr. King doing pirouettes in his grave. I'm just surprised they didn't have one of the Horsemen rub Rocky's head for good luck.

JON KARESH: Dusty Rhodes was always bad over the past few years but he was even worse this year when he was working for a promotion that for some reason seemed to be out to humiliate him as often as possible.

MYSTERY III: Hulk Hogan because if people find out that you are a big wrestling fan, they automatically think you act like the mindless Hulk Hogan fans.

MYSTERY I: Survivor Series was beamed free of charge to our front line reservists in Saudi Arabia during a critical period in world history. Not sure whether they'd be coming back to the States alive they must have felt great about being exploited as part of a bad wrestling angle. Thanks, Sarge and especially Titan Sports for taking the fourth oldest profession on this planet behind farming, fishing and something that the Observer can't print and debasing it beyond belief. Never in my life have I felt so embarrassed to be from this great country, let alone feign even a casual interest in pro wrestling after Slaughter's interview. No wonder the overwhelming majority of people laugh whenever any attempt is made to discuss pro wrestling as a serious business.

STEVE SIMS: I've got nothing against Tony Atlas, but his entrance music and his costuming make me want to vomit. I wonder how six-year-old black kids feel watching him.

JEFF BOWDREN: Okay, JFD is a fat piece of goo and Giant Baba may look like a skeleton but nothing is more representative of what is wrong with professional wrestling than Jim Hellwig. It would be nice to think that if and when Hellwig ends up like Superstar Graham that Vince McMahon would lose a little bit of sleep over it. But he won't. And because he — and other promoters — continue to consciously or even unconsciously urge young men to put poison in their bodies, these men will have years taken off of their lives. And when it happens, it will be swept under the rug, and it will continue to happen to a whole new cycle of young men. The promoters who did this are the moral equivalent of crack dealers, and that's what embarrasses me about pro wrestling.

JOHN MCADAM: This is a true story. I was dating a reasonably intelligent, attractive girl this past spring and I made the mistake of telling her that I was a wrestling fan. The next Saturday she called me, laughing, wanting to know who was the fat guy with the polka dots and why was he dancing with a 300 pound black woman, who was also clad in polka dots. And most of all, why did I watch this? I think it was the last time she called me.



Rockers



Butch Reed and Ron Simmons

CHAMPIONS OF 1990

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

WWF HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Hulk Hogan (def. Randy Savage April 2, 1989, in Atlantic City, NJ)
2. Ultimate Warrior (def. Hulk Hogan April 1, 1990, in Toronto, ONT)

INTERCONTINENTAL

1. Anabolic Warrior (def. Rick Rude August 28, 1989, in East Rutherford, NJ)
2. Ultimate Warrior vacated championship after winning WWF title April 1, 1990
3. Mr. Perfect (def. Tito Santana in tournament final April 23, 1990, in Austin, TX)
4. Kerry Von Erich (def. Mr. Perfect August 27, 1990, in Philadelphia, PA)
5. Mr. Perfect (def. Kerry Von Erich November 19, 1990, in Rochester, NY)

WWF TAG TEAM

1. Andre the Giant & Haku (def. Demolition December 13, 1989, in Huntsville, AL)
2. Demolition (def. Andre the Giant & Haku April 1, 1990, in Toronto, ONT)
3. Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart (def. Demolition August 27, 1990, in Philadelphia, PA)
4. Shawn Michaels & Marty Janetty (def. Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart October 30, 1990, in Fort Wayne, IN)
5. Vince McMahon changed his mind about the title change, belts given back to Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

NWA HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Ric Flair (def. Rick Steamboat May 7, 1989, in Nashville, TN)
2. Sting (def. Ric Flair July 8, 1990, in Baltimore, MD)

UNITED STATES

1. Lex Luger (def. Michael Hayes May 22, 1989, in Bluefield, WV)
2. Stan Hansen (def. Lex Luger October 27, 1990, in Chicago, IL)
3. Lex Luger (def. Stan Hansen December 16, 1990, in St. Louis, MO)

NWA TELEVISION

1. Great Muta (def. Sting September 3, 1989, in Atlanta, GA)
2. Arn Anderson (def. Great Muta January 2, 1990, in Gainesville, GA)
3. Tom Zenk (def. Arn Anderson December 4, 1990, in Gainesville, GA)

NWA TAG TEAM

1. Rick & Scott Steiner (def. Michael Hayes & Jimmy Garvin November 1, 1989, in Atlanta, GA)
2. Ron Simmons & Butch Reed (def. Rick & Scott Steiner May 19, 1990, in Washington, DC)

U.S. TAG TEAM

1. Tom Zenk & Brian Pillman (def. Michael Hayes & Jimmy Garvin in tournament final February 12, 1990, in Rainsville, AL)
2. Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane (def. Tom Zenk & Brian Pillman May 19, 1990, in Washington, DC)
3. Rick & Scott Steiner (def. Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane August 24, 1990, in East Rutherford, NJ)

UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

USWA HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Jerry Lawler (def. Kerry Von Erich to win Texas version of the title April 14, 1989, in Dallas, TX)
1. King Cobra (def. Jerry Lawler to win Tennessee version December 30, 1989, in Memphis, TN)
2. Jerry Lawler (def. King Cobra to win Tennessee version January 8, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
3. Jimmy Valiant (def. Jerry Lawler to win Tennessee version February 26, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
4. Jerry Lawler (def. Jimmy Valiant to win Tennessee version March 12, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
5. Jimmy Valiant (def. Jerry Lawler to win Tennessee version April 28, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
6. Jerry Lawler (def. Jimmy Valiant to win Tennessee version May 4, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
7. Snowman (def. Jerry Lawler June 18, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
8. Snowman quits promotion, title vacated
9. Jerry Lawler (def. Austin Idol in tournament final October 8, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
10. Terry Funk (def. Jerry Lawler November 5, 1990, in Memphis, TN)

TEXAS HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Jerry Lawler (def. Kerry Von Erich December 12, 1989, in Dallas, TX)
2. Kerry Von Erich (def. Jerry Lawler January 5, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
3. Angel of Death (awarded title by forfeit July 13, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
4. USWA stopped promoting in Dallas, Texas title moved to World Class promotion with Angel of Death as champion
5. Kevin Von Erich (def. Angel of Death November 23, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
6. World Class promotion folded, title disappeared

SOUTHERN HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Bill Dundee (def. Tony Anthony November 19, 1989, in Memphis, TN)
2. John Tatum (def. Bill Dundee for Texas version May 3, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
3. Bill Dundee (def. John Tatum for Texas version May 18, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
4. John Tatum (announced as champion in Tennessee by virtue of "beating" Bill Dundee May 18, 1990, in Dallas, TX in fictitious match)
5. Bill Dundee (def. John Tatum for Tennessee version June 4, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
6. John Tatum (def. Bill Dundee for Texas version June 15, 1990, in Dallas, TX)

7. Bill Dundee (def. John Tatum for Texas version June 22, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
8. John Tatum (def. Bill Dundee for both versions July 4, 1990, in Dallas, TX)
9. Championship forgotten
10. Dick Slater announced as new champion having beaten John Tatum in fictitious match in October
11. Jeff Jarrett (def. Dick Slater October 6, 1990, in Nashville, TN)
12. Eddie Gilbert (def. Jeff Jarrett October 29, 1990, in Memphis, TN)

USWA TAG TEAM

1. Robert Fuller & Brian Lee (def. Jeff Jarrett & Matt Borne in tournament final December 1, 1989, in Dallas, TX)
2. Rex King & Steve Doll (def. Robert Fuller & Brian Lee February 3, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
3. Robert Fuller & Brian Lee (def. Rex King & Steve Doll February 3, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
4. Rex King & Steve Doll (def. Robert Fuller & Brian Lee February 12, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
5. Brickhouse Brown & Sweet Daddy Falcone (def. Rex King & Steve Doll April 28, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
6. Rex King & Steve Doll (def. Brickhouse Brown & Sweet Daddy Falcone May 21, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
7. Tony Anthony & Tom Burton (def. Rex King in handicap match after Steve Doll left the promotion June 16, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
8. Rex King & Joey Maggs (def. Tony Anthony & Tom Burton June 23, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
9. Brian Lee & Don Harris (def. Rex King & Joey Maggs August 11, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
10. Titles held up after August 29, 1990 match in Memphis, TN against Jeff Jarrett & Jeff Gaylord
11. Jeff Jarrett & Jeff Gaylord (def. Brian Lee & Chuck Casey subbing for Don Harris September 3, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
12. Brian Lee & Don Harris (def. Jeff Jarrett & Jeff Gaylord September 10, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
13. Jeff Jarrett & Jeff Gaylord (def. Brian Lee & Don Harris September 17, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
14. Doug Gilbert & Tony Anthony (def. Jeff Jarrett & Jeff Gaylord October 6, 1990, in Memphis, TN)
15. Jeff Jarrett & Cody Michaels (def. Doug Gilbert & Tony Anthony November 24, 1990, in Jonesboro, AR)
16. Doug Gilbert & Tony Anthony (def. Jeff Jarrett & Cody Michaels December 8, 1990, in Memphis, TN)

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

AWA HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Larry Zbyszko (won Battle Royal February 7, 1989, in St. Paul, MN)
2. Masa Saito (def. Larry Zbyszko February 10, 1990, in Tokyo)
3. Larry Zbyszko (def. Masa Saito April 8, 1990, in St. Paul, MN)
4. Title vacated in December when Larry Zbyszko signed with NWA

AWA TAG TEAM

1. Wayne Bloom & Mike Enos (def. Greg Gagne & Paul Diamond in tournament final October 1, 1989, in Rochester, MN)
2. The Trooper & D.J. Peterson (def. Wayne Bloom & Mike Enos August 11, 1990, in Rochester, MN)

NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Big Van Vader (def. Riki Choshu August 10, 1989, in Tokyo)
2. Riki Choshu (def. Big Van Vader August 19, 1990, in Tokyo)
3. Tatsumi Fujinami (def. Riki Choshu December 26, 1990, in Hamamatsu)

IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Naoki Sano (def. Jushin Riger August 10, 1989, in Tokyo)
2. Jushin Riger (def. Naoki Sano January 31, 1990, in Osaka)
3. Pegasus Kid (def. Jushin Riger August 19, 1990, in Tokyo)
4. Jushin Riger (def. Pegasus Kid November 1, 1990, in Tokyo)

IWGP TAG TEAM

1. Masa Saito & Shinya Hashimoto (def. Riki Choshu & Takayuki Iizuka September 20, 1989, in Osaka)
2. Keiji Muto & Masa Chono (def. Masa Saito & Shinya Hashimoto April 27, 1990, in Tokyo)
3. Hiroshi Hase & Kensuke Sasaki (def. Keiji Muto & Masa Chono November 1, 1990, in Tokyo)
4. Super Strong Machine & Hiro Saito (def. Hiroshi Hase & Kensuke Sasaki December 26, 1990, in Hamamatsu)

ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING

TRIPLE CROWN HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Jumbo Tsuruta (def. Genichiro Tenryu October 11, 1989, in Yokohama)
2. Terry Gordy (def. Jumbo Tsuruta June 5, 1990, in Chiba)
3. Stan Hansen (def. Terry Gordy June 8, 1990, in Tokyo)
4. Terry Gordy (def. Stan Hansen July 17, 1990 in Ishikawa)
5. Terry Gordy hospitalized after heart attack scare, title vacated
6. Stan Hansen (def. Mitsuharu Misawa in elimination match June 27, 1990, in Matsudo)

PWF JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Masa Fuchi (def. Joe Malenko October 20, 1989, in Nagoya)

PWF & INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM

1. Stan Hansen & Genichiro Tenryu (def. Jumbo Tsuruta & Yoshiaki Yatsu in tag team tournament finals December 6, 1989, in Tokyo)
2. Terry Gordy & Steve Williams (def. Stan Hansen & Genichiro Tenryu March 6, 1990, in Tokyo)
3. Jumbo Tsuruta & Great Kabuki (def. Terry Gordy & Steve Williams July 19, 1990, in Tokyo)
4. Great Kabuki quit promotion in August, titles vacated
5. Terry Gordy & Steve Williams (def. Stan Hansen & Danny Spivey in tournament finals December 7, 1990, in Tokyo)

ALL-ASIAN TAG TEAM

1. Toshiaki Kawada & Samson Fuyuki (def. Dan Kroffat & Doug Furnas October 20, 1989, in Nagoya)
2. Dan Kroffat & Doug Furnas (def. Toshiaki Kawada & Samson Fuyuki March 6, 1990, in Tokyo)

3. Tiger Mask & Kenta Kobashi (def. Dan Kroffat & Doug Furnas April 9, 1990, in Okayama)
4. Tiger Mask vacated titles after unmasking as Mitsuhiro Misawa
5. Shinichi Nakano & Akira Taue (def. Davey Boy Smith & Johnny Smith in elimination match June 5, 1990, in Chiba)
6. Shinichi Nakano quit promotion in July, titles vacated
7. Johnny Ace & Kenta Kobashi (def. Tommy Rogers & Bobby Fulton in tournament final September 7, 1990 in Fukui)

ALL JAPAN WOMEN

WWWA

1. Lioness Asuka retired in October, title vacated
2. Bull Nakano (def. Mitsuko Nishiwaki in elimination match January 1, 1990, in Tokyo)

IWA

1. Madusa (def. Beastie in elimination match September 14, 1989, in Kumamoto)
2. Madusa retired in December, title vacated

PACIFIC

1. Noriyo Tateno (def. Bull Nakano November 13, 1989, in Ashikaga)
2. Aja Kong (def. Noriyo Tateno April 30, 1990, in Chiba)
3. Suzuka Minami (def. Aja Kong via disqualification June 17, 1990, in Tokyo)
4. Suzuka Minami refused title because her victory was by disqualification
5. Minami Toyota (def. Bison Kimura in elimination match for vacated title October 7, 1990, in Tokyo)

JAPANESE

1. Minami Toyota (def. Mika Takahashi in elimination match November 17, 1989, in Masuda)
2. Minami Toyota vacated title in September
3. Kyoko Inoue (def. Takako Inoue in elimination match for vacated title October 2, 1990, in Yamagata)

WWWA TAG TEAM

1. Grizzly Iwamoto & Aja Kong (def. Yumiko Hotta & Mitsuko Nishiwaki December 9, 1989, in Tokyo)
2. Akira Hokuto & Suzuka Minami (def. Grizzly Iwamoto & Aja Kong February 7, 1990, in Osaka)
3. Aja Kong & Bison Kimura (def. Akira Hokuto & Suzuka Minami December 9, 1990, in Tokyo)

JAPANESE TAG TEAM

1. Title vacant
2. Mika Takahashi & Kaoru Maeda (def. Manami Toyoda & Mima Shimoda in elimination match June 1, 1990, in Kawauchi)
3. Mima Shimoda & Etsuko Mita (def. Mika Takahashi & Kaoru Maeda November 14, 1990, in Yokohama)

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

PACIFIC NORTHWEST HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Scotty The Body (def. Rex King October 14, 1989, in Portland, OR)
2. Curtis Thompson (def. Scotty the Body February 3, 1990, in Portland, OR)

3. Title held up after March 30, 1990 match in Eugene, OR, between Curtis Thompson and Scotty the Body
4. Brian Adams (def. Larry Oliver in tournament final April 21, 1990, in Portland, OR)
5. Scott Norton (def. Brian Adams May 12, 1990, in Portland, OR)
6. Scott Norton suspended May 26, 1990, title vacated
7. Scotty the Body (def. The Grappler in elimination match June 2, 1990, in Portland, OR)
8. The Grappler (def. Scotty the Body August 4, 1990, in Portland, OR)
9. Steve Doll (def. The Grappler November 10, 1990, in Portland, OR)

PACIFIC NORTHWEST TAG TEAM

1. The Grappler & Brian Adams (def. Rex King & Steve Doll December 14, 1989, in Salem, OR)
2. Rex King & Steve Doll (def. The Grappler & Brian Adams January 27, 1990, in Portland, OR)
3. Rex King & Steve Doll left the territory, titles vacated
4. Big Juice & Beetlejuice (def. The Grappler & Brian Adams in finals of tag team tournament March 31, 1990, in Portland, OR)
5. Curtis Thompson & Ricky Santana (def. Big Juice & Beetlejuice May 12, 1990, in Portland, OR)
6. Titles held up after June 16, 1990 match in Portland, OR, between Curtis Thompson & Ricky Santana vs. Big Juice & Beetlejuice
7. Big Juice & Beetlejuice (def. Curtis Thompson & Ricky Santana June 23, 1990, in Portland, OR)
8. Big Juice lost loser leaves town match, titles vacated
9. Al Madril & Ricky Santana (def. Steve Doll & Scott Norton via DQ in elimination match August 25, 1990, in Portland, OR)
10. Rip & Larry Oliver (def. Al Madril & Ricky Santana September 29, 1990, in Portland, OR)
11. The Grappler & The Equalizer (def. Rip & Larry Oliver November 3, 1990, in Portland, OR)
12. Scotty the Body & Steve Doll (def. The Grappler & The Equalizer December 3, 1990, in Coos Bay, OR)
13. The Grappler & The Equalizer (def. Scotty the Body & Steve Doll December 5, 1990, in Gresham, OR)

WORLD WRESTLING COUNCIL

UNIVERSAL

1. Leo Burke (def. Carlitos Colon December 17, 1989, in Mayaguez, PR)
2. TNT (def. Leo Burke February 9, 1990, in Caguas, PR)
3. Abdullah the Butcher (def. TNT March 24, 1990, in San Juan, PR)
4. Carlitos Colon (def. Abdullah the Butcher March 31, 1990, in San Juan, PR)
5. Title held up after Carlitos Colon vs. Greg Valentine match December 15, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)

CARIBBEAN HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Miguelito Perez (def. Rip Rogers November 4, 1989, in Bayamon, PR)
2. Harley Race (def. Miguelito Perez January 6, 1990, in San Juan, PR)
3. Invader #1 (def. Harley Race)
4. Leo Burke (def. Invader #1)
5. Invader #1 (def. Leo Burke July 7, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)
6. Kim Duk (def. Invader #1 September 8, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)
7. El Bronco (def. Kim Duk December 15, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)

WWC JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Super Medico (def. Chicky Starr August 4, 1989, in Caguas, PR)
2. Eddie Watts (def. Super Medico January 27, 1990, in Guaynabo, PR)
3. Hurricane Castillo Jr. (def. Eddie Watts)
4. Ron Starr (def. Hurricane Castillo Jr.)
5. Invader #4 (def. Ron Starr)
6. Ron Starr (def. Invader #4 September 26, 1990, in Miramar, PR)
7. Hurricane Castillo Jr. (def. Ron Starr October 6, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)
8. Billy Travis (def. Hurricane Castillo Jr. November 3, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)

WWC TAG TEAM

1. Mark & Chris Youngblood (def. Abbuda Dein & Rip Rogers October 7, 1989, in Bayamon, PR)
2. Cuban Assassin & Ron Starr (def. Mark & Chris Youngblood February 4, 1990, in Agadilla, PR)
3. Super Medicos (def. Cuban Assassin & Ron Starr March 31, 1990, in San Juan, PR)
4. Rick Valentine & Lance Idol (def. Super Medicos August 4, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)
5. Super Medicos (def. Rick Valentine & Lance Idol September 25, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)
6. Texas Hangmen (def. Super Medicos September 29, 1990, in Carolina, PR)

CARIBBEAN TAG TEAM

1. Cuban Assassin & Jerry Morrow (def. Hurricane Castillo Jr. & Miguelito Perez October 7, 1989, in Bayamon, PR)
2. Titles stripped from Cuban Assassin & Jerry Morrow when Morrow left territory
3. Invader #1 & Invader #4 (def. Cuban Assassin & Ron Starr in tournament final March 10, 1990, in San Juan, PR)
4. Cuban Assassin & Ron Starr (def. Invader #1 & Invader #4)
5. Miguelito Perez & Hurricane Castillo Jr. (def. Cuban Assassin & Ron Starr July 7, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)
6. Eric Embry & Rick Valentine (def. Miguelito Perez & Hurricane Castillo Jr. September 23, 1990, in Juanadiaz, PR)
7. Super Medicos (def. Eric Embry & Rick Valentine)
8. Eric Embry & Rick Valentine (def. Super Medicos December 15, 1990, in Bayamon, PR)

FLORIDA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

FLORIDA HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Steve Keim (def. Kendall Windham August 24, 1989, in Tampa, FL)

FLORIDA TAG TEAM

1. Bounty Hunters (def. Mark Starr & Lou Perez November 16, 1990, in Tampa, FL)
2. Nasty Boys (def. Bounty Hunters)
3. Robert Fuller & Kendall Windham (def. Nasty Boys April 12, 1990, in Tampa, FL)
4. Mike Graham & Joe Gomez (def. Robert Fuller & Kendall Windham May 8, 1990, in Tampa, FL)
5. Mike Graham retired, titles vacated
6. Mark Starr & Sgt. Rock (def. Joe Gomez & Hurricane Walker in elimination match September 13, 1990, in Tampa, FL)

UNIVERSAL WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

UWA LIGHTWEIGHT

1. El Hijo Del Santo (def. El Espanto Jr. May 29, 1988, in Mexico City)

UWA WELTERWEIGHT

1. Charles Lucero
2. El Hijo Del Santo (def. Charles Lucero April 27, 1990, in Nuevo Leon)

UWA MIDDLEWEIGHT

1. Cuchillo (def. Super Astro September 4, 1988, in Mexico City)
2. Yoshihiro Asai (def. Cuchillo April 6, 1990, in Mexico City)
3. Cuchillo (def. Yoshihiro Asai May 21, 1990, in Puebla)
4. Yoshihiro Asai (def. Cuchillo June 4, 1990, in Tokyo, Japan)
5. Super Astro (def. Yoshihiro Asai December 28, 1990, in Tijuana)

UWA JUNIOR LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Ringo Mendoza
2. Perro Aguayo (def. Ringo Mendoza June 29, 1990, in Mexico City)

UWA LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Zandokan (def. Villano I January 17, 1987, in Mexico City)
2. El Gran Hamada (def. Zandokan April 2, 1990, in Mexico City)

UWA JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Astro de Oro
2. Dr. Wagner Jr. (def. Astro de Oro May 20, 1990, in Guatemala)
3. Astro de Oro (def. Dr. Wagner Jr. July 15, 1990, in Mexico City)
4. Dr. Wagner Jr. (def. Astro de Oro July 22, 1990, in Mexico City)

UWA HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Big Van Vader (def. Canek November 22, 1989, in Mexico City)
2. Canek (def. Big Van Vader December 9, 1990, in Mexico City)

UWA TRIOS

1. Los Brazos
2. Rambo & Kahos & Zandokan (def. Los Brazos March 18, 1990, in Mexico City)
3. Villanos (def. Rambo & Kahos & Zandokan June 24, 1990, in Mexico City)
4. Los Brazos (def. Villanos October 21, 1990, in Mexico City)

UWA WOMEN

1. Lola Gonzales (def. Harley Saito October 8, 1987, in Tokyo)

UWA WOMEN JUNIOR

1. Title vacant
2. Mayumi Ozaki (def. The Scorpion in elimination match July 19, 1990, in Tokyo)

WWF LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Sangre Chicana
2. Villano III (def. Sangre Chicana May 27, 1990, in Mexico City)

NWA WELTERWEIGHT

1. Fuerza Guerrera (def. Aguila Solitaria September 21, 1989, in Puebla)

NWA MIDDLEWEIGHT

1. Angel Azteca
2. El Dandy (def. Angel Azteca June 1, 1990, in Mexico City)
3. Atlantis (def. El Dandy August 1, 1990, in Acapulco)



Sid Vicious

NWA LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

1. Fabuloso Blondie
2. Lizmark (def. Fabuloso Blondie March 21, 1990, in Acapulco)
3. El Satanico (def. Lizmark November 26, 1990, in Guanajuato)

NWA INTERCONTINENTAL

1. Pirata Morgan
2. El Faraon (def. Pirata Morgan October 13, 1990, in Mexico City)

EUROPE

CWA HEAVYWEIGHT

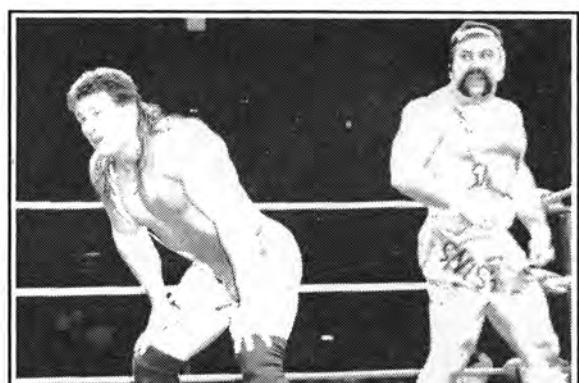
1. Leon "Bull Power" White (def. Otto Wanz)
2. Otto Wanz (def. Leon "Bull Power" White)
3. Title vacated when Wanz announced his retirement
4. Leon "Bull Power" White (def. Rambo in elimination match December 22, 1990, in Bremen, Germany)



Shawn Michaels



Abdullah the Butcher



Steiner Brothers

THE SUPER CARDS

NORTH AMERICAN PAY-PER-VIEW SHOWS OF 1990 AND JAPANESE SHOWS AT THE TOKYO DOME

WWF ROYAL RUMBLE - JANUARY 21

Site: Orlando Arena
Live attendance: 16,000 (sellout approximately 14,200 paid)
Live gate: \$170,000
Approximate buy rate: 1.9 percent
Approximate PPV revenue: \$4.4 million
Observer poll results: Thumbs up (47.7 percent); Thumbs down (35.3 percent); In the middle (17.0 percent)

1. Bushwhackers def. Jacques & Raymond Rougeau (13:34) $\frac{1}{4}\star$
2. Brutus Beefcake double disqualification with The Genius (11:16) \star
3. Ron Garvin def. Greg Valentine via submission (16:52) $\star\star$
4. Jim Duggan def. Big Bossman via disqualification (10:24) $-\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
5. Hulk Hogan won Royal Rumble Battle Royal (58:46) $\star\star\star$

TOKYO DOME - FEBRUARY 10

Site: Tokyo Dome
Live attendance: 63,900 (sellout)

1. Takayuki Iizuka pinned Osamu Matsuda (10:49) $\star\frac{1}{4}$
2. Naoki Sano & Pegasus Kid def. Jushin Riger & Akira Nogami (16:57) $\star\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
3. Norio Honaga & Tatsutoshi Goto & Hiro Saito def. Kantaro Hoshino & Kuniaki Kobayashi & Hiroshi Hase (13:29) $\star\star\star$
4. Brad Rheingans pinned Victor Zangiev (6:30) \star
5. Steve Williams pinned Salman Hashimikov (9:00) $\star\star$
6. AWA championship: Masa Saito pinned Larry Zbyszko to win championship (11:29) $\star\star\frac{3}{4}$
7. Jumbo Tsuruta & Yoshiaki Yatsu def. Kengo Kimura & Osamu Kido (15:06) $\star\star\star$
8. Tiger Mask & Genichiro Tenryu def. Riki Choshu & George Takano via count out (18:19) $\star\star\star\star\frac{1}{2}$
9. IWGP championship: Big Van Vader double count out with Stan Hansen (15:47) $\star\star\frac{3}{4}$
10. Koji Kitao pinned Bam Bam Bigelow (9:18) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
11. Antonio Inoki & Seiji Sakaguchi def. Masa Chono & Shinya Hashimoto (15:43) $\star\frac{1}{2}$

WRESTLE WAR '90 - FEBRUARY 25

Site: Greensboro Coliseum
Live attendance: 7,894 (approximately 7,100 paid)
Live gate: \$85,000
Approximate buy rate: 1.6 percent
Approximate PPV revenue: \$2.9 million
Observer poll results: Thumbs up (54.7 percent); Thumbs down (36.1 percent); In the middle (9.2 percent)

1. Buzz Sawyer & Kevin Sullivan def. Shane Douglas & Johnny Ace (10:14) $\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
2. Norman pinned Cactus Jack Manson (9:33) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
3. Rock & Roll Express def. Midnight Express (22:47) $\star\star\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
4. Road Warriors def. Mean Mark Callous & Mystery Man (Mike Enos) (4:58) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
5. U.S. tag team def. Michael Hayes & Jimmy Garvin (24:30) $\frac{1}{2}\star$
6. NWA tag team championship: Rick & Scott Steiner def. Ole & Arn Anderson (16:04) $\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
7. NWA championship: Ric Flair def. Lex Luger via count out (38:07) $\star\star\star\star\frac{1}{2}$

WWF WRESTLEMANIA VI - APRIL 1

Site: Toronto Sky Dome
Live attendance: 64,287
Live gate: \$3.4 million (U.S. currency North American record)
Approximate buy rate: 3.8 percent
Approximate PPV revenue: \$15.0 million
Observer poll results: Thumbs up (74.7 percent); Thumbs down (20.3 percent); In the middle (5.0 percent)

1. Rick Martel def. Koko Ware (5:00) $\star\star$
2. WWF tag team championship: Demolition def. Andre the Giant & Haku to win championship (9:30) $\star\star$
3. Earthquake pinned Hercules (4:52) \star
4. Brutus Beefcake pinned Mr. Perfect (7:48) $\star\star\frac{3}{4}$
5. Roddy Piper double count out with Badnews Brown (6:48) $\star\frac{3}{4}$
6. Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart def. Nikolai Volkoff & Boris Zhukov (0:18) $\frac{1}{4}\star$
7. The Barbarian pinned Tito Santana (4:32) $\frac{3}{4}\star$
8. Dusty Rhodes & Sapphire def. Randy Savage & Queen Sensational Sherri (7:30) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
9. Orient Express def. Rockers via count out (7:38) $\star\star\star$
10. Jim Duggan pinned Dino Bravo (4:15) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
11. Ted DiBiase def. Jake Roberts via count out (11:52) $\star\star\frac{1}{2}$
12. Big Bossman pinned Akeem (1:47) $-\frac{1}{2}\star$
13. Rick Rude pinned Jimmy Snuka (3:44) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
14. WWF championship: Ultimate Warrior pinned Hulk Hogan to win championship (22:39) $\star\star\star\frac{3}{4}$

U.S. AND JAPAN WRESTLING SUMMIT - APRIL 13

Site: Tokyo Egg Dome
Live attendance: 53,742 (41,000 paid)
Live gate: \$2.1 million

1. Dan Kroffat & Doug Furnas & Joe Malenko def. Toshiaki Kawada & Samson Fuyuki & Tatsumi Kitahara (11:56) $\star\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
2. IWGP junior heavyweight championship: Jushin Riger pinned Akira Nogami (8:37) $\star\star\star\frac{3}{4}$
3. Jimmy Snuka & Tito Santana def. Kenta Kobashi & Masa Fuchi (8:28) $\star\star\frac{3}{4}$
4. Tiger Mask drew with Bret Hart (20:00) $\star\frac{1}{2}$
5. Great Kabuki pinned Greg Valentine (7:16) $\frac{3}{4}\star$
6. Jake Roberts pinned Big Bossman (10:25) $\star\frac{1}{4}$
7. IWGP tag team championship: Masa Saito & Shinya Hashimoto def. Riki Choshu & Masa Chono (13:00) $\star\star\star\star$
8. Jumbo Tsuruta & Haku def. Mr. Perfect & Rick Martel (10:53) $\star\star\frac{1}{4}$
9. Genichiro Tenryu pinned Randy Savage (10:49) $\star\star\star\star$
10. WWF championship: Ultimate Warrior pinned Ted DiBiase (6:12) $\frac{1}{4}\star$
11. Giant Baba & Andre the Giant def. Demolition (6:39) $-\star$
12. Hulk Hogan pinned Stan Hansen (12:30) $\star\star\star\frac{1}{2}$

NWA CAPITAL COMBAT '90 - MAY 19

Site: Washington, D.C. Armory
Live attendance: 6,000 (sellout)
Live gate: \$98,000
Approximate buy rate: 1.4 percent
Approximate PPV revenue: \$2.5 million
Observer poll results: Thumbs up (37.0 percent); Thumbs down (55.1 percent); In the middle (7.9 percent)

1. Road Warriors & Norman def. Cactus Jack Manson & Bam Bam Bigelow & Kevin Sullivan (9:16) ★★½
2. Mean Mark pinned Johnny Ace (10:37) ★¾
3. Samoan Swat Team def. Mike Rotunda & Tommy Rich (17:54) ½★
4. hair vs. hair match: Paul Ellering pinned Teddy Long (1:57) -☆☆½
5. U.S. tag team championship: Midnight Express def. Tom Zenk & Brian Pillman to win championship (20:19) ★★★¾
6. Rock & Roll Express def. Fabulous Freebirds (18:59) ★★¾
7. NWA tag team championship: Doom def. Rick & Scott Steiner to win championship (19:18) ★★★¾
8. NWA championship: Lex Luger def. Ric Flair via disqualification in cage match (17:21) ★★★½

NWA GREAT AMERICAN BASH '90 - JULY 8

Site: Baltimore Arena
 Live attendance: 10,000 (8,900 paid)
 Live gate: \$153,000
 Approximate buy rate: 1.8 percent
 Approximate PPV revenue: \$3.5 million
 Observer poll results: Thumbs up (93.8 percent); Thumbs down (5.1 percent); In the middle (1.0 percent)

1. Brian Pillman pinned Buddy Landel (9:32) ★★¾
2. Mike Rotunda pinned Iron Sheik (6:51) ¾★
3. Doug Furnas pinned Dutch Mantell (11:18) ★½
4. Harley Race pinned Tommy Rich (6:29) ★★½
5. U.S. tag team championship: Midnight Express def. Southern Boys (18:14) ★★★★¾
6. Big Van Vader pinned Tom Zenk (2:16) ½★
7. Rick & Scott Steiner def. Fabulous Freebirds (13:46) ★★★½
8. Junkfood Dog & El Gigante & Paul Orndorff def. Arn Anderson & Barry Windham & Sid Vicious via disqualification (8:33) ★
9. U.S. championship: Lex Luger pinned Mean Mark (12:07) ★★★
10. NWA tag team championship: Doom def. Rock & Roll Express (15:14) ★★½
11. NWA championship: Sting pinned Ric Flair to win championship (16:05) ★★★¾

WWF SUMMER SLAM '90 - AUGUST 27

Site: Philadelphia Spectrum
 Live attendance: 19,304 (sellout 18,703 paid)
 Live gate: \$338,452
 Approximate buy rate: 3.9 percent
 Approximate PPV revenue: \$12.5 million
 Observer poll results: Thumbs up (50.1 percent); Thumbs down (34.3 percent); In the middle (15.6 percent)

1. Power & Glory def. The Rockers (6:01) ★★★
2. Intercontinental championship: Kerry Von Erich pinned Mr. Perfect to win championship (5:13) ★
3. Sensational Sherri def. Sapphire via forfeit
4. The Warlord pinned Tito Santana (5:28) DUD
5. WWF tag team championship: Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart def. Demolition in two of three falls to win championship (13:49) ★★★½
6. Jake Roberts def. Badnews Brown via disqualification (4:43) -☆
7. Jim Duggan & Nikolai Volkoff def. Orient Express (3:05) -☆
8. Randy Savage pinned Dusty Rhodes (2:15) -☆
9. Hulk Hogan def. Earthquake via count out (13:09) ★★½
10. WWF championship: Ultimate Warrior def. Rick Rude in cage match (10:01) ★★½

NWA HALLOWEEN HAVOC '90 - OCTOBER 27

Site: UIC Pavilion in Chicago
 Live attendance: 8,000 (sellout - 7,000 paid)
 Live gate: \$115,000
 Approximate buy rate: 1.2 percent
 Approximate PPV revenue: \$3.1 million
 Observer poll results: Thumbs up (64.5 percent); Thumbs down (27.5 percent); In the middle (8.0 percent)

1. Tommy Rich & Ricky Morton def. Midnight Express (20:49) ★★★½
2. Terry Taylor pinned Bill Irwin (11:54) ★★¾
3. Brad Armstrong pinned J.W. Storm (5:02) ★½
4. Master Blasters def. Southern Boys (7:17) ★
5. Fabulous Freebirds def. Mark & Chris Youngblood (17:28) -☆☆
6. U.S. tag team championship: Rick & Scott Steiner def. Nasty Boys (15:24) ★★★¾
7. Junkfood Dog pinned Moondog Rex (3:15) DUD
8. NWA tag team championship: Doom double count out with Ric Flair & Arn Anderson (18:20) ★★★
9. U.S. championship: Stan Hansen pinned Lex Luger to win championship (9:28) ★★½
10. NWA championship: Sting pinned Sid Vicious (12:40) ★½

WWF SURVIVOR SERIES '90 - NOVEMBER 22

Site: Hartford Civic Center
 Live attendance: 16,000 (13,000 paid)
 Live gate: \$216,000
 Approximate buy rate: 3.0 percent
 Approximate PPV revenue: \$8.8 million
 Observer poll results: Thumbs up (42.7 percent); Thumbs down (50.0 percent); In the middle (7.3 percent)

1. Ultimate Warrior & Kerry Von Erich & Legion of Doom def. Demolition & Mr. Perfect (14:19) ★★½
2. Ted DiBiase & Greg Valentine & Honkeytonk Man & The Undertaker def. Dusty Rhodes & Koko Ware & Bret Hart & Jim Neidhart (13:59) ★★★½
3. Rick Martel & Hercules & Paul Roma & The Warlord def. Jake Roberts & Shawn Michaels & Marty Janetty & Jimmy Snuka (18:06) ★★★½
4. Hulk Hogan & Tugboat & Big Bossman & Jim Duggan def. Earthquake & Dino Bravo & The Barbarian & Haku (14:50) ★★
5. Nikolai Volkoff & Tito Santana & Bushwhackers def. Sgt. Slaughter & Orient Express & Boris Zhukov (10:37) ★
6. Hulk Hogan & Ultimate Warrior & Tito Santana def. The Warlord & Hercules & Paul Roma & Ted DiBiase & Rick Martel (9:09) ★½

NWA STARRCADE '90 - DECEMBER 16

Site: St. Louis Kiel Auditorium
 Live attendance: 7,200 (6,357 paid)
 Live gate: \$93,425
 Approximate buy rate: 1.0 percent
 Approximate PPV revenue: \$2.6 million
 Observer poll results: Thumbs up (52.2 percent); Thumbs down (39.4 percent); In the middle (8.4 percent)

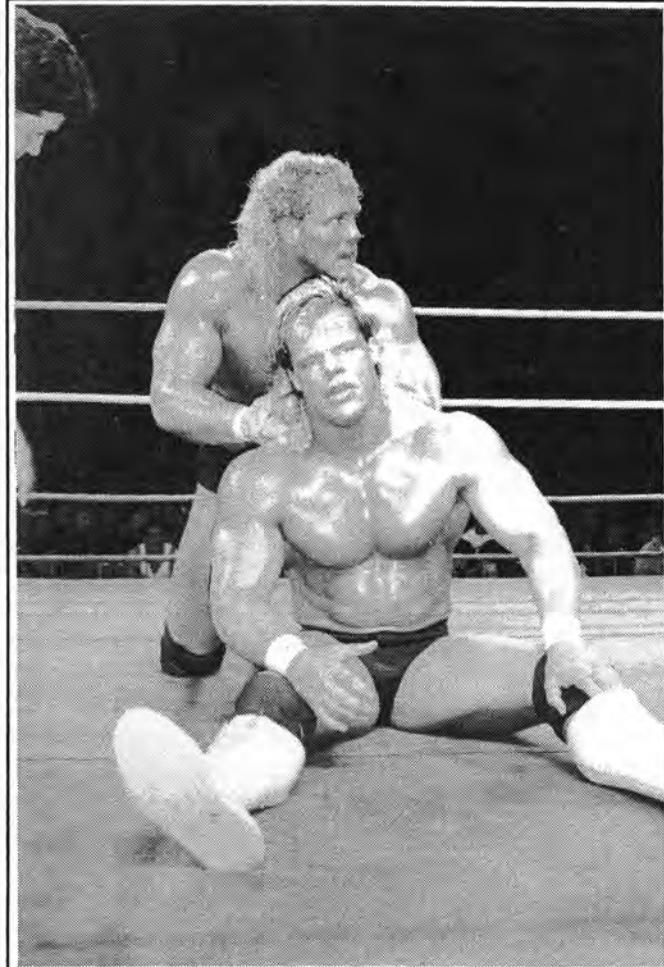
1. Bobby Eaton pinned Tom Zenk (8:45) ★★★
2. PAT O'CONNOR TAG TEAM TOURNAMENT — FIRST ROUND
3. Rick & Scott Steiner def. Sgt. Kruger & Col. DeKlerk (2:12) ★½

3. Konnan & Rey Misterio def. Chris Adams & Norman Smiley (5:29) ★½
4. Masa Saito & Great Muta def. Rip Morgan & Jacko Victory (5:41) ★¾
5. Salman Hashimikov & Victor Zangiev def. Dan Johnson & Troy Montour (3:54) -☆½

6. Michael Wall Street pinned Terry Taylor (6:52) ★★¼
7. Sid Vicious & Danny Spivey def. Motor City Mad Man & Big Cat (1:01) ★
8. Ricky Morton & Tommy Rich def. Michael Hayes & Jimmy Garvin (6:13) ★★½

TOURNAMENT — SEMIFINALS

9. Rick & Scott Steiner def. Konnan & Rey Misterio (2:51) ★



Sid Vicious and Lex Luger

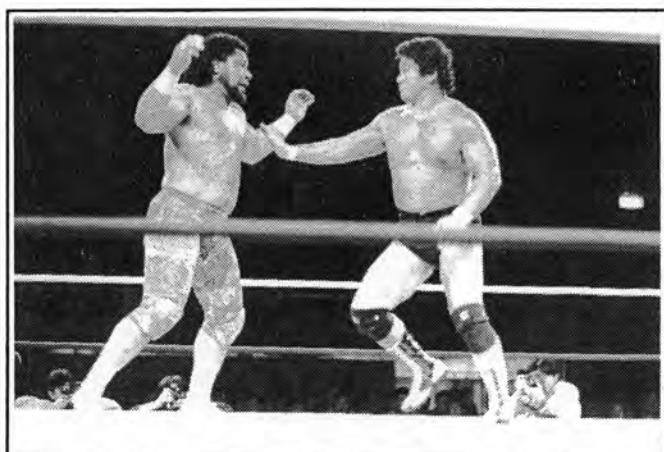
10. Masa Saito & Great Muta def. Salman Hashimikov & Victor Zangiev (3:08) ★
11. Bull-rope match for U.S. title: Lex Luger def. Stan Hansen (10:13) ★★★¼
12. Street fight for NWA tag title: Doom went to a double pin against Arn Anderson & Barry Windham (7:19) ★★★★

TOURNAMENT — FINAL

13. Rick & Scott Steiner def. Masa Saito & Great Muta (10:53) ★★★¼
14. Cage match for NWA title: Sting pinned Black Scorpion, who turned out to be Ric Flair (18:31) ¾★



Big Van Vader



Tenryu vs. Haku



Nasty Boys

WRESTLING WITH THE DEVIL

MILDRED BURKE CREATED A SPORT AND BECAME ITS GREATEST CHAMPION ALL IN SPITE OF THE MAN, HER HUSBAND, WHO WAS TRYING TO DESTROY HER

By Frank Deford

Wrestling is in one of its cyclical boom periods now, but there are almost no women's bouts in America. The women in wrestling here are "managers," hand maidens and showpieces with cleavage. They themselves don't wrestle. But when professional wrestling was first in its heyday, a "ladies" match was common on most bills. There was, however, only one champion, Mildred Burke, and there was only one women's wrestling promoter, Billy Wolfe. Together, they created a sport.

Mildred was sweet and naive. Billy was an ugly satyr. Mildred and Billy were also married to each other, they despised each other, and they needed each other desperately...

She first saw Billy Wolfe one hellish hot summer's day in 1932 on Troost Street, in Kansas City, Mo. The Depression lay upon the dusty land, and even good Americans were finding it harder and harder to believe in tomorrow.

Mildred Bliss (for that was her name to start with) was growing desperate. She had left school at 15, but when her boss attacked her, she quit, even scarce as jobs were. Somewhat later, she landed a job as a waitress on an Indian reservation in New Mexico, but when an old boyfriend came through on his way to California, she left with him. "I would have married anyone to get off that reservation," Millie said.

But they couldn't cut it, not even in California, and Millie and her husband ended up back in K.C. That was where she saw her first wrestling match, at the old Midway Arena. There were something like 1,500 fans on hand, and maybe three or four of them were women. It was one dandy show. Wrestling was already changing from pure contest to a mix of athletics and theater. The trouble with real wrestling was that it was too easy for the best wrestlers to counter each other, to wrestle defensively. As a consequence, the best technical matches were, as often as not, the most boring. The sport was dying at the gate with these authentic contests that were known in the trade as "shooting" matches, so they were being replaced by "working" matches, where style counted more than substance.

Photo Courtesy of Global Wrestling News Service

Mildred Burke

by it. She would even come to think that she was so instinctive a wrestler that it must have been innate, that she reincarnated from some ancient male wrestler. Or something. It was eerie. But then, at that time, 1932, she couldn't dwell on any of it. The husband she didn't love had left her, which wouldn't have been so bad except that he had left her pregnant. Luckily, Millie's mother came back to K.C. and opened Mom's Cafe on Troost Street,



Photo Courtesy of Global Wrestling News Service

Mildred Burke

serving full, home cooked meals for a clientele that scraped up two-bits for the dinner. And Millie got a job slinging hash at Mom's.

That was when she saw Billy Wolfe, the erstwhile middleweight wrestling champion of Missouri. Even seven months pregnant, Millie was cute. Petite, she stood only 5-2, and in her prime weighed no more than 138. Wolfe, who leered at most anything in a skirt, leered at her legs. He was 20 years older than Millie, twice her age, and she found him nearly repulsive: gnarled, blocky, with cauliflower ears, sinister eyes behind his horn-rimmed glasses, with a cigar stuck in a stubby, gap-toothed mouth that brought to mind a jack o'lantern. But, right away, Millie saw the old wrestler as a way out of Mom's Cafe.

Shortly after she gave birth to a son, Joe, Millie began to beg Billy for a chance to try wrestling. In his usual charm-laden way, he would snort and reply: "You? You ain't no bigger than a pint of piss." But Millie persisted, so one day he took her over to his gym, which was a few blocks away, up over a garage. She put Joe in his bassinet down by the ring and changed into a Gertrude Ederle bathing suit and boy's high-top sneakers. She came out to find her opponent, a gypsy boy, a head taller and twenty pounds heavier. Wolfe had promised the gypsy two bucks, with a little extra if he whipped Millie decisively, so as soon as the gong rang, he tore across the ring, lifted the startled young mother up over his head, whirled her around in an airplane spin, and started to fling her to the canvas. But here came the instinct, the reincarnation business. Somehow, Millie twisted in his grasp, dropped to the ring on her feet, tripped the surprised opponent and pinned him in a flash.

When Wolfe demanded a replay, Millie sprang at the gypsy, and, aping his moves, picked him up, spun him and flung him and pinned him. Billy Wolfe was beside himself. He came up with a plan, pronto. He would take the girl off to join the Landis Shows, put her on the midway, and have her take on all male comers. Millie was thrilled at this prospect for excitement and employment.

She told her mother to sell Mom's Cafe and head back to California. Then she and Joe piled into Billy's old Ford and took off with him to Abilene, where they would get hitched and go into show biz. It was along the road when he asked her to hand over her share of the \$200 they had got for Mom's Cafe. Millie told him that since she was going to work now, with a husband to support her to boot, she had let her mother keep it all.

Billy Wolfe screamed at her and drew back his hand to wallop her. His eyes glinted savagely, and spittle foamed at his snarled lips. Millie cowered by the car door, protecting her baby. Billy shrieked that she was so stupid he wouldn't marry her after all. In fact, he said, he might just turn her into the police and take her baby. That was because, he explained, she was a married woman who had just crossed the state line with a man other than her husband, so she was liable to jail and the forfeiture of her child. This was, of course, nonsense, and, indeed, Wolfe himself might have been liable to prosecution under the Mann Act. Millie was still only 19 but she believed him and began to live in his thrall.

"I didn't have one dollar to my name. I was completely in this man's power. The whole character of our relationship was set at that moment," she said many years later. She huddled way over in the seat, holding baby

Joe to her breast, until at last they got to Abilene, where Millie Bliss could wrestle grown men for a living.

Talkies were coming in, and the richer folks in town had radio sets, but there were still scores of carnivals amusing America then: Tempting midways of naked light bulbs, Ferris wheels, hurdy-gurdy music, candy apples and lemonade, games of skill for unskilled rubes. And freak shows: the fat woman, dwarfs and giants, the tattooed man and the dog-faced boy. The top acts were what the carneys called "concerts," which meant you could charge the hicks extra. Hermaphrodites, for best example, were classic concerts. Bears that danced were another big one in the line. And the two-headed child was always good for another nickel even if it turned out to be a barely formed fetus in a murky bottle. But: caveat emptor. Carneys were the bottom of the barrel, free-white-and-twenty-one division. Most towns wouldn't even let the carnival's employees off the premises. Drifters and scoundrels, tramps, runaways. It was a raw life on the move in a pinched time, and everybody was fair game.

Carneys called their rookies "the first of May" dating back to a pre-Sunbelt age when most road shows didn't get going till spring. A newcomer, you see, was so green, he was the first of May. By that standard, Millie Bliss was about March the 24th, a novice of novices.

Wolfe gave her only a handful of brief workouts before he threw her to the crowds. "Hurry, hurry, hurry! Twenty-five, I say 25 dollars, to anyone who can beat the little lady in 10 minutes time! Pin or submission!"

Twenty-five dollars was uptown cash then. Wolfe restricted the opposition to those no more than a head or so larger than Millie "we accept your challenge!" he would scream, in the first-person plural not because he cared about her well-being, but because he didn't want to take too many chances with the 25 bucks. In her spare time, Wolfe had her train other female wrestlers. Ostensibly, this was going to provide Millie with intra-gender competition, which she dreamed of, but in fact it was because Wolfe saw a good thing, and he wanted to replace Millie with another, more pliant wrestler. Also, he seduced Millie's pretenders, as he would her competitors all their marriage.

"The first time I talked to Billy," says Bette Carter, a wrestler who was a teenager, one-third his age when she first met the promoter, "he said to me: 'I got two questions for you: Are you a lesbian, and if you're not, will you sleep with me?' That was all, just like that.

"I'm not lesbian, but I said: 'It's none of your business, and second: no, I won't.' It didn't bother Billy. He just shrugged and said: 'OK, then you'll never get to be champion.' Billy Wolfe was the daddy of us all, but he was a terrible bully. He loved to pit girls against each other outside the ring. He loved to see girls fighting."

One day on the carnival, when Mildred was working the bally board, hustling tickets for the evening show, Billy was back in their trailer, carrying on with one of his women. Baby Joey woke up and started crying, ruining the mood for the lovers, so Wolfe pummeled the poor child, leaving his little body a mass of bruises and welts. When Millie came home and found Joey, she immediately packed her valise and took off down the road, hitchhiking with Joey. The first man who picked her up pulled over and tried to rape her, and even though she escaped, she had no place left to go.

She begged Wolfe to come get her. But at least she laid it on the line to him about the child. "Billy," she said, straight out, "if you ever touch Joey again, I'll wait till you're asleep, and then I'll cut your head off your body."

Whatever may have existed of an intimate relationship, even of convenience, had long vanished. Not even Joe Wolfe can ever recall a single affectionate moment between Mildred and Billy. But she thought she needed him, and she kept proving that he did need her. "Billy was a powerful personality," Joe Wolfe says, "but in wrestling, without Mildred Burke, Bill was nothing."

Night after night, the grimy young men of the Midwest would step forward to take her on. She was Mildred Burke now a name that had come to Wolfe one night out of the blue as he worked the bally. Bliss was no name for a wrestler. Burke. Mildred Burke. And the toughs would step forward "we accept your challenge!" and they would stride into the ring, and Mildred Burke would turn them upside down and show them up, pin them, or hold them at bay. Two years, she never lost a carney match, the men in the audience screaming at the action, gasping at the titillation, the cute little woman in tights, squirming against the men, one after another. Billy Wolfe's athletic show was a hit, night after night, the dazzle of the midway.

Then Millie hurt a knee, and Billy told her to hit the road. Just like that. She pleaded with him. Tears were rolling down her cheeks. She begged. At last, he agreed. "All right, temporarily," he said. Get this: he would allow Millie to stay until she trained another woman to replace herself in the act.

She was reprieved. She could still work on her dream of being an athlete, not a carney. And one day, when, miraculously, her knee popped back into its socket while she was training her replacement, she began to look seriously beyond the midway. Somewhere out there, there had to be other ladies who wanted to wrestle.

First, though, Mildred wrote letters to newspapers in the smaller towns all over the Midwest, offering the standard \$25 to any man her size who could beat her in his hometown. One fellow, a dishwasher in Bethany, Mo., who was earning five bucks a week, answered the challenge. The match filled the hall in Bethany. Millie whipped him and was on her way.

Soon, she was wrestling men all over. Billy couldn't believe it; it was the same scam as the carnivals, but the stakes were much higher. He was, in fact, so pleased with these expanding prospects that he finally made an honest woman out of Millie. They were joined in holy matrimony, Mr. and Mrs. Billy Wolfe.

Her renown was spreading, and, at last, other women, penniless in the Depression, unable to find traditional work, began to imitate Millie. "You've got to understand," says Mae Young, a longtime rival who first wrestled Millie in 1940 in Tulsa, "if it hadn't been for Mildred Burke, there wouldn't have been any girl wrestling. Ever."

Down South, one Cora Jurgens began making a name for herself in the ring against men. She was well represented by several large, sharp men in wing-tip shoes, and they possessed the foresight Mildred had and Billy didn't; they proposed a match between Cora and Mildred for the ladies wrestling world championship. There was real money promised, so: "We accept your challenge!" Only when Millie and Billy got to Birmingham they found out

there was a fly in the ointment. The fix was in for the hometown queen. When Millie protested, four goons worked Billy over. So Millie lost.

But the show was a critical and financial success, and Billy convinced Millie to replay it all over Dixie. She would almost pin Cora, and then she would let Cora escape and Cora would win. The fans went wild. Finally, though, Millie got Cora to agree to a shooting match. It was set for Chattanooga. Only wouldn't you know it, Cora's men in the wing-tip shoes bought the ref, and when Millie put Cora away, the ref jumped in and said Millie had used an illegal hold and raised Cora's hand in victory.

But the people could smell a rat. They weren't born yesterday in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The arena went up for grabs. The fans poured into the ring and hoisted Millie onto their shoulders and forced the judges to give her the brand spanking new championship belt. But that wasn't satisfaction enough for Millie. She spotted Cora sneaking back into the dressing room and chased after her. Millie remembered it like this: "Cora cowered over near the shower, so I went over to her, and right there, with no spectators and no payment, I beat the living daylights out of her."

Then Millie shook her finger at the sniveling would-be. "That'll teach you to pull a double-cross on me," she said. Cora just sobbed some more. "So, who's the champion?"

"You are, Millie," Cora gasped. "You are the champion."

And so she was. The money began to roll in. Mildred Burke estimated that she made in excess of \$4,000,000 in her career \$50,000 in 1938 when the average major league ballplayer was pulling down approximately \$6,000. Millie was making six-figures two decades before the world celebrated Billie Jean King as the first \$100,000-a-year female athlete. Billy had to set up a fancy booking office in Columbus, Ohio, where he could sleep with his women and spend Millie's money.

She was on the road, wrestling, night after night, six nights most weeks, in cities that were sometimes hundreds of miles apart. Mostly, she would leave right after the night's match, sleeping in the car by the side of the road when she wasn't at the wheel. She put 100,000 miles and more onto a new Buick every year. And there were no interstates then. There was no automobile air conditioning then either, and automobile heaters were not reliable.

Her knees ached a lot of the time. Her nose was broken and an opponent stomped on her mouth once, causing \$2,000 worth of dental work. Both of her thumbs were ripped out of their joints and pushed back to her wrists. It was not glamorous, and it was even worse during the war when the rubber and the engines went off to fight the enemy, and a lot of the time she had to ride buses, standing up for the soldiers.

But oh, when Mildred Burke, wrestling queen, World Champion Lady Wrestler, got to the arena, There she was transformed. She wore the most gorgeous attire. Remember, this was the Depression. This was when most everybody had nothing, and the movies were all escapist, drawing-room comedies and lavish musicals, where men in top hat and tails waltzed with women slinky in silk and sequins. And Mildred too. Her gowns. Furs. Sixty-dollar sneakers, matching wrestling

suits and robes, ermine-trimmed. Why, one robe weighed 20 pounds with all the rhinestones. Billy bought her diamonds, to boot, hairpins and tiaras, watches and necklaces.

She was always in the newspapers. Mildred Burke is in town. Newsreels. A lot of men took a shine to her. A United States senator, John Bricker, was very sweet on her. She was not unattractive. Not in the least. Sometimes, the satin suits she wrestled in had cut-out sides, with lots of skin. For her own publicity photos, Millie posed in even more daring cheesecake, naked in high heels with only furs or towels hiding her charms. Millie was what was called a pin-up then.

"And now, ladies and gentleman, the undefeated ladies wrestling champion... the one... the only... Mildred Burke!!!"

The spotlight. Rhinestones and ermine. The crowd cheering. The music was an instrumental known as Sabre Dance. It was her anthem. Sabre Dance went bop-bop-bop-bop-bop-bop, aaajaa, aaaaajaaaa, as best as you can phoneticize it. It was terribly distinct, Sabre Dance.

Then Millie would come into the ring, strip down to her suit and parade about. She was tremendously strong. At the height of her powers, the Los Angeles Police Department displayed her poster in the precincts, trying to shame the male cops into getting into better shape. Invariably, her opponent was larger; Millie won with leverage, dexterity and cunning. Most of her matches she concluded with her world-famous "alligator clutch," which involved twisting her opponent this way and that and then sitting on her to best effect.

The way Billy Wolfe figured it, lady wrestling was here to stay, and if he could just dethrone Mildred (one way or another) and control her conqueror, he would be better for it. With this mind set, he tried everything, for shame to trickery to murder.

He killed her dog once. He spread a story that she was dying of cancer, so no one should book her any more. Regularly, when Millie was injured or under the weather, he would suddenly order one of his inamoratas to try and beat her, "shooting," when they were only supposed to be "working." In restaurants and public places, Billy loved to cry out, "Mildred Burke is so dumb, she'd work if I threw her a fish." Once, he sicked a lesbian wrestler on her in their motel room and laughed diabolically as Millie tried to escape. He blatantly slept with her opponents, and he took a special delight in deriding her small breasts, comparing them to other wrestlers' especially to Nell Stewart, his favorite.

Millie was convinced that Billy tried to have her drowned once and killed on three occasions in car accidents when automobile parts suspiciously failed. And, of course, he would beat her. One time, outside a liquor store in Los Angeles, Billy and another large, 200-pound man pummeled her up against her car. As Millie remembered it: "Only my devotion to training and my washboard abdominal muscles saved me from permanent injury. Punched slammed into my ribs and kidneys, my solar plexus and breasts. Bang, bang, bang went my head on the car roof, as the two men kept cursing me, trying to knock me senseless. But they could not make me promise to lose to Nell Stewart. They could not make me give up my title."

Billy could not understand that he was her only real opponent; he was her shooting match, every day. Millie didn't wear a wedding band. On her third finger, left hand, she wore a large ring with a royal crown. Like a nun who wears a ring to signify that she is married to the Church. Mildred was married to lady wrestling. She had created it, and she would not let it go especially she would not let her husband take it from her.

Finally, after two decades, she did summon up the courage to divorce him, but even then she let Billy get the best of the settlement. What she took was a lot of the jewelry he had given her and then she found out most of it wasn't worth anywhere near what he had told her. "Oh, how much I envied the relationship other wives had with a regular, straight-ahead and decent man," she said.

Through all those miserable years together, though, she only once seems to have fallen in love with another man. And the other man was — this is like Shakespeare or like soap opera — the other man was Billy Wolfe's only son.

He was known as G. Bill Wolfe to distinguish him from his father. He was six years younger than Millie, and his father sent him on the road with his stepmother when she finally asked for a chauffeur. Eventually, the awe G. Bill had for Millie grew into something else, and at last G. Bill got up the nerve to go to Billy and, in effect, ask him to give over his wife to his son.

Billy was prepared. He already knew what was going on, and after watching Bill squirm, he fiendishly laughed in his son's face, mocking him, before he loosed a cascade of vile accusations against Millie. G. Bill began to weep. "Bill, you sonuvabitch," Billy said, "you ain't never gonna get Mildred. Now me, I don't want her myself — just what I can get out of her. But no one else is getting her. Now get the hell outta here."

To rub it in, Billy took G. Bill away from Millie and made him become the driver for Nell Stewart, his mistress. Millie went back on the road by herself. "Destiny and my own relentless ambition had shackled me to a dog in the manger," she wrote years later. "A dog that grew progressively more vicious even as I filled his coffers with money."

But she so loved wrestling that she could abide what her husband did to her. Only rarely did she "let the whole thing get to me." One such night was in Atlanta, before a match with Nell Stewart. As Millie recalled: "Nell was pretty. No doubt of that. And all the promoters — not just Billy — were fond of her because of her big gates. She was sitting in the dressing room, primping, and she took a long, special look at herself. Then she patted her ample bosom. 'These are the real thing, Millie,' she said. 'Yeah, Nell, I know they're the real thing,' I said. 'And my husband knows they're the real thing. But what's important is under them, so when your heart gets to be the real thing, you'll have something to brag about. Until then, if I were you, I'd keep my mouth shut.'

"Nell sat there with her mouth open, her eyes wide and her brassiere off. And 15 minutes later, in the ring, I manicured the mat with Ms. Stewart, throwing her around like a bean bag. 'Nell,' I said, 'that's the real thing.'

"Billy had her thinking that I was a complete idiot, instead of a protector of the sport and the business that I loved."

Once Mildred Burke got things straightened out with Cora Jurgens in Chattanooga, she never lost another match, shooting or working. All told, in the ring, she won 150 matches against men and something like 5,000 against women, in most states of the union, Canada, Mexico, Japan and Cuba. The band played "Hail to the Chief" for her when she landed in Havana. She retired undefeated, beating Ruth Boatcallie in Reno in January of 1955 in her finale, when she was just short of her 40th birthday. Ruth had once blinded Millie in one eye with a fingernail but even with that, she couldn't put her away. "No one could physically beat Millie in the ring," Mae Young says, leaving it at that.

The last time Millie saw Billy and G. Bill, the two men in her wrestling life, was in Atlanta in 1954, when she had a shooting match with June Byers. Millie's knee

went out of its socket, but she shoved it back and wrestled 47 minutes for real to keep the title. Thus, she foiled Billy to the end.

By that time, though, G. Bill, drinking heavily, had turned against her no less than his father. That time Billy and another man beat up Millie outside the liquor store — the other man was G. Bill.

After Billy and Millie divorced, he married Nell Stewart. G. Bill married June Byers, but both couples were divorced by the time the two men died, Billy Wolfe in 1961, his son one year later.

After she retired from the ring, Mildred Burke trained many female wrestlers, but there was never another one like her. Ladies wrestling peaked with her, and it has never been the same since Millie and Billy ran it in their fashion, working the crowd, shooting each other. Mildred Burke died two summers ago, at the age of 73, bigger in her sport than anybody ever was in theirs.



Aja Kong



Yoshihiro Asai



Shinya Hahimoto and Tatsumi Fujinami



Lee Gak Soo

A FLAIR ALL HIS OWN

'NATURE BOY' IS STILL THE CHAMP IN AN EVER-CHANGING ARENA

By Billy Warden and Jonathan Prober

Special thanks to the RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER for permission to use this story that ran originally in the January 27, 1991 edition

To those of you who delight in pointing at the television during a wrestling show and saying confidently, "That stuff is fake," congratulations on your razor-keen powers of perception.

But if by "fake" you mean that the outcome is predetermined, well, wrestling shares that certitude with life itself, doesn't it? But in wrestling, as in life, it's the journey that really matters. And no wrestler, anywhere, at anytime, has mastered this peculiar blend of sport, theater and morality play as thoroughly as Ric Flair.

He is unmistakable: The Nature Boy, with filigreed silver hair and eyes the color of gunmetal. As he enters the ring and the spotlight picks him up, the baubles and floss on his extravagant robes throw light onto the faces of the fans. Understand that there are other wrestlers who wear robes, and worse: helmets, masks, steam-spouting spiked shoulder pads, Mohawks. But none of them are Ric Flair.

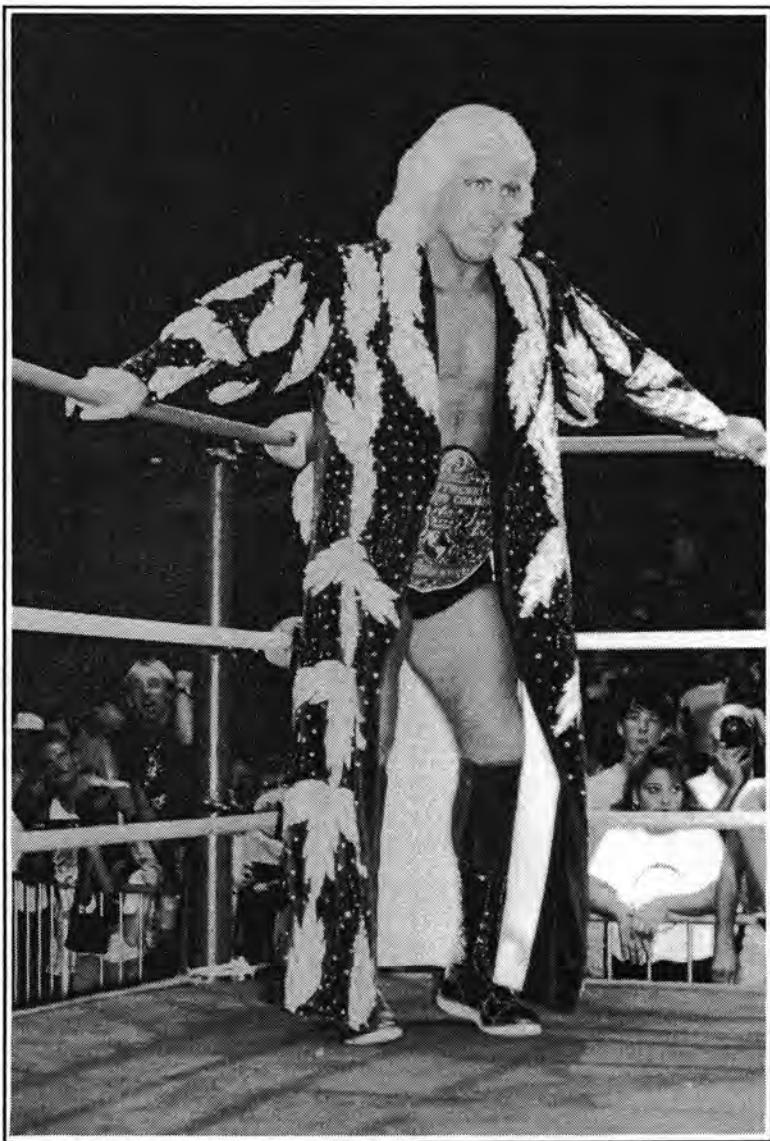
Ric Flair is dead cool. Out of the feathered robe he leisurely steps, folds it carefully and hands it to an attendant. Never too fast. Never too slow. He brushes his opponent with his eyes, up and down, like a painter. But he paints contempt. He knows an easy mark, and he knows the joy of performing. And when it is time, when it is exactly the right time, he throws back his head ecstatically, takes in the lights and the faces and the noise, and gives a great "WOOOOOO!"

One of his best particular talents is to switch from gleeful sadism to abject surrender. First, a devastating series of open-handed blows to the chest, the smacks reverberating throughout the arena. Then, the sudden reversal of fortune so peculiar to wrestling: Flair backing into the corner on his knees, hands prayerfully upraised, begging for mercy. He milks every second and he is masterful.

Millions of people know this Nature Boy, seven-times world heavyweight champion of the National Wrestling Alliance (now called World Championship Wrestling) and owned since late 1988 by Ted Turner. They know

him as a bedrock wrestler in a universe of shifting identities, loyalties, gimmicks and shtick. He is on television. He is in magazines. But in many other respects, he is the Man In The Gray Flannel Suit, an employee of a communications empire whose fate is decided by buttoned-down men in an Atlanta office building. So he sits behind curtains in arenas and worries about dwindling crowds, his place in the sport and employers who really might not understand just how good he is. There is another Ric Flair. A great athlete on the wrong side of 40 and trapped, ironically, by his 18 years of round-the-calendar, round-the-world wrestling, as well as the changing tastes of the industry's promoters and fans.

"When things go good, he gets the credit.





"When they go bad, he gets the blame," says Dave Meltzer, wrestling columnist for The National and publisher of the Wrestling Observer, the industry's leading newsletter. The Observer's readers have voted Flair the Wrestler of the Year eight of the past ten years. "The promotion thought young fans wouldn't relate to Flair, so there was a movement last year to phase Ric down."

This trend has been apparent to any aficionado of wrestling. Wrestlers with years of experience, actual wrestling skill and great theatricality, like Flair, Arn Anderson and others--are losing ground to monstrous, made-up, preternaturally musclebound cartoon characters who look awesome standing still on television but are zip in the ring. Flair's pride and his sense of craftsmanship have led him to disdain such gimmicks when he can.

GROWING UP

Think a minute about what a professional wrestler's childhood might be like.

Rough and tumble, right? Slum apartment, a boozy mom, a dad who disappeared.

Think again. Ric Flair grew up in a well-to-do suburb of Minneapolis. His parents worshiped their only child. His father, Dick Fliehr, was a gynecologist and local theater director. Drama is in Flair's genes.

Flair owned a dog named Rinty, a playful black sheep-herd/lab. He and a friend bought a busted old convertible when they were teenagers and turned it into a souped-up yellow hot-rod.

Flair was not sharp in school, but he was popular. And big. His mother, Kay, softens when she talks about how big and strong he was. In her eyes, he has become mythic.

Dick and Kay Fliehr, both 72, are sitting on a wicker couch in the bright, spanking-clean kitchen of Ric Flair's red brick three-story home in south Charlotte. At the

other end of the kitchen sits Ric's second wife, Beth, a Floridian who was introduced to Ric by one of the Embers. Two cute blond kids scurry about: Ashley is four and Reid is two.

Ashley finds her way back to her indulgent grandfather, who picks up the chat.

"Listen," says Dr. Fliehr. "A lot of these wrestlers are very well educated."

"Yes, who was that one fellow, he used to sit and recite Shakespeare for us,"

says his wife. "Oh...it was one of those bald-headed fellows...."

"Koloff."

"Yes! Ivan Koloff, a wonderful man."

Flair does not recite Shakespeare. Flair dropped out of the University of Minnesota during his second year when his grades made him ineligible for the football team. Not long after that, he fell under the sway of his friend, Greg Gagne, who helped him decide to become a professional wrestler. Greg is the son of storied wrestler Verne Gagne.

But before Flair took this fateful turn, one last formality: "Dad," he said, "if this is going to cause you any embarrassment, I won't do it."

Dr. Fliehr told his son, "Go ahead, do it. Just make sure you're the best."

To that end, Flair could find no better teacher than Verne Gagne. There weren't makeup and voice lessons in this school. Flair quit training three times, but returned, exhibiting a single-mindedness familiar to his friends and mentors.

"It was clear that he had a plan," says Mike McGee, currently the athletic director at the University of Southern California, who recruited Flair for the University of Minnesota football team. "I had no doubts he would be successful. He had a lot of maturity and sense of goals. He had a career in any sport he chose."

He chose pro wrestling.

But all the time, there are those who will say wrestling is fake and that Ric Flair is nothing more than a Sham King. The accusations rattle his mother.

"If it's all fake, then anybody can do it, just get in the ring and yell and scream. There would be nothing to it, right?"

She believes pro wrestling is the most dangerous sport there is. Neither Mom nor Dad particularly like to watch their son wrestle on TV, they say, cringing, "You'll understand when you have a child."

As they speak, Dick and Kay Fliehr's boy is in his private gym, an outbuilding in back of the house next to the pool. He works out for at least one-and-a-half hours daily when home. On the road, he finds a health club.

After finishing a tour of the gym, the highlight of which is his prized Stairmaster, Flair sits on a gray, padded weight bench. He 6-foot, 235-pound body rests; his need to be champion again roils.

"They've got to give me the deal back or else they're gonna go out of business."

He realizes quickly that his Flair-sized ego is talking, and backs off, as though the boss suddenly walked by his desk. "No, no, no, I didn't mean that. They don't need anybody."

PLAYING CATCH-UP

The power of Ted Turner and WCW is the power of television. Flair is on television less than he was a few years ago. His TV raps were once explosive and irresistible: "All the girls want to climb Space Mountain," he would yell, fingering the lapels of his suit. "I'm a Rolex-wearin', limousine ridin' son-of-a-gun, custom-made from head to toe," he'd say, giving a short sharp forward tilt for emphasis. "I am the man. And to be the man"--tapping his chest--"you've got to beat the man." Then a toss of the silver mane and "WOOOOOO!"

Now his TV talk seems restrained, even flat, and his hair has been cut. Thoughts of Samson shorn are hard to resist.

Two years ago Flair found that he couldn't summon the juice he used to bring to the ring. He wallowed and wondered whether he was finished, and finally saw a sports psychologist.

"I was having a hard time getting myself up. I mean, I felt I was up but it was....different. I saw myself as the most marketable person in the world, and there I was, all dressed up and nowhere to go."

Other wrestlers, meanwhile, migrated north to Vince McMahon Jr.'s World Wrestling Federation, the organization which in the mid-80s turned the game from performance art for low-function people into a respectable yuppie pastime. McMahon turned Hulk Hogan into a national celebrity, created the "rock-and-wrestling" connection with Cyndi Lauper, and secured from NBC wrestling's first major network television contract since the 50s. McMahon's marketing savvy swamped the industry and forced other wrestling promotions, including Flair's NWA to play marketing catch-up.

Thus, Flair has been the superstar player on wrestling's second string promotion. Three years ago he passed up an opportunity to jump to the WWF out of loyalty to the NWA's previous owners.

When the opportunity rolled around again, the NWA had changed hands, but Flair had signed a three-year WCW contract with Turner estimated at approximately \$750,000 a year.

Flair, like many fans, wonders what he missed. A showdown with Hogan would have been inevitable, a legitimate mega-event.

"It would have been three weeks of television, me and him, hollering at each other. We could have sold out the Los Angeles Coliseum," he muses.

This past July, Flair lost the WCW championship belt to Sting.

But even after that point, when those in or close to wrestling made reference to "The Champ," it was Flair who they were talking about.

Sting, with short spiked hair, face paint, blond hair and a bodybuilder's physique was wrestling's latest Blond Thing. A wrestler of five years experience, he is distin-



guished as much by his television appeal as his ring savvy. He makes no secret of his career goals: some wrestling, followed by a tenure as an action/adventure muscleman, a la Schwarzeneggar. His foot is in the door. He recently made his acting debut in an episode of "Super Force."

Such exposure fits with WCW's plans, the promotion needs a crossover celebrity like Hulk Hogan, someone whose appeal extends beyond the squared circle.

Sting says that unlike Flair, he won't be wrestling when his 40th birthday rolls around.

DRAWING A CROWD

Flair and Sting fought for the world title at the Greensboro Coliseum on a recent winter night. They've been taking this match all over the country, and Sting always wins, usually just barely.

Greensboro holds particular meaning for Flair. It's the city where he won his second NWA championship, from Harley Race, at the first Starrcade, drawing what was then a pro wrestling record gate. The Coliseum is a building he filled with regularity. His matches in the building have become legendary in wrestling with opponents like Greg Valentine, Ricky Steamboat, Wahoo McDaniel, Dick "Captain Redneck" Murdoch, Roddy Piper, The Brisco brothers, The Funk brothers, the Koloffs, the Andersons....

Tonight, the promoter says they pulled in a crowd of 2,500. He's being optimistic.

Chris Broner is 17 and sports an athletic jacket emblazoned with MA (for Mount Airy High School) in big fuzzy white letters. Nine gold and silver medals dangle from the blue jacket, wrestling medals worn for all to see, worn like a championship belt.

He is the proto-typical late-generation Ric Flair fan. There are many reason for this kid's awe of Flair:

1. Confidence oozes out of Ric Flair. He would never pause, even for a second, to worry about exams, complexion problems or curfews.
2. No one cows Ric Flair. He talks trash to one and all.
3. The blond locks and cocky strut drive women mad.
4. Flair raises Cain on a regular basis with the Four Horsemen, a group of wrestling bad guys who have formed a legendary mutual defense association of the sort any high-school hellcat would yearn for.

"Yeah, Flair is bad! I like that. He was born bad!"

But is he as bad as he used to be?

Some of the glow leaves Chris Broner's pink face. Before the boy can answer, an older man with greased back hair and a thin, fragile frame pushes forward.

"Flair has lost his touch," insists James Buchanan, 51. "His tricks, his ring action--the touch just isn't there like it used to be. Before he used to come out and he'd have so much energy. Now it's like he's lost interest."

Chris Broner nods and fingers his medals before adding, "Yeah, he's lost

a little bit. I used to see him when he wrestled Harley Race. Boy, he sure was it then."

Meanwhile, Ric Flair, wearing a soft, subdued purple sweater and a glittering Rolex, lowers himself into a brown folding chair behind the sprawling black curtain that separates the wrestlers' dressing rooms from the crowd.

He asks a short Hispanic man to bring him coffee, then worries that the man might have to pay for it with his own money.

Flair doesn't need coffee. He is talkative, direct and incredible focused. Nasally girls' voices from beyond the curtain call "Ric Flair sucks!" over and over again. But he does not hear them.

Focusing may be Flair's best character trait. Years ago he focused himself on being the best wrestler in the profession and has stayed at or near that position for nearly two decades.

"Five years ago, when I started out, the only name I knew was Ric Flair. I knew he was the best," says Sting, who is 31. "I remember wrestling him in Greensboro in 1988, and being completely psyched up about being in the ring with him."

Athletes from other sports admire him, too.

"Ric Flair has been the quintessential wrestler of the past decade," says Brad Muster, a fullback for the Chicago Bears. "They have to perform every day. He has a lot of athletic ability. People think they're just actors and performers but it takes a great athlete to survive the years and take the punishment."

Flair says he'll take the punishment for another five years or so, even though some fans wish he would retire sooner to save his reputation.

When retirement does come, Flair has more prosaic plans: He may open a car dealership. but wrestling is still foremost on his mind.

"I like this business so much, I like the guys so much. I know it could be great again tomorrow," he says. "It's



a very difficult thing to wake up as the best wrestler in the world and know that there are some people out there who don't understand that."

He flashes a grin as he gets up from his chair and offers a gentle handshake before he disappears into the dressing room.

AS UNPREDICTABLE AS LIFE

Sloppy hot dogs wrapped in foil, hungry mouths, popcorn spilling on the messy concrete floor, and then, a spotlight. It strikes the back of the arena where Ric Flair stands, hands on hips, resplendent in a pink robe that looks stitched together from the red-hot dreams of a dozen Vegas show girls.

A leather-jacketed fan in a ringside seat frantically waves a sign in the air. "Nature Boy" it says in silver sparkling letters surrounded by matted white fringe.

Into the ring strides the Nature Boy. Then Sting, the champion, in lurid green tights with his trademark scorpion running up a well-muscled thigh. Hip toss, body slam, headlock, illegal use of ropes!

Now this match looks like a fight. Flair is the punisher, Flair is the chicken, Flair controls the audience....

"WOOOOOO!"

And then he is being beaten, beaten, beaten...beaten bloody. The first time Flair bled in a wrestling match was more than 17 years ago. He rolled out of the ring,

hurried back to the dressing room, looked at himself in the mirror and "loved it." But it must be old hat by now.

Shoulders down, the ref counts:

"One!"

The crowd... "Two!"...counts along.

"Three."

A fist is raised in victory. It's Sting's fist. Still the champ. Flair is bloody and beaten. Vegas robe, matted fringe. The best wrestler in the game. Beaten again.

When the match is over, yellow ceiling lights flood the arena again. Two women gather their purses and prepare to leave.

Vicky Roberts, 40, a waitress, loves Ric Flair.

Pam Johnson, 29, a pantyhose salesman, loves Sting.

But Ms. Johnson admits, "Flair is the man everyone paid to see."

"Ric Flair IS wrestling," says Ms. Roberts. "When Ric Flair quits, that's the end of wrestling."

Maybe not wrestling. But a big part of wrestling.

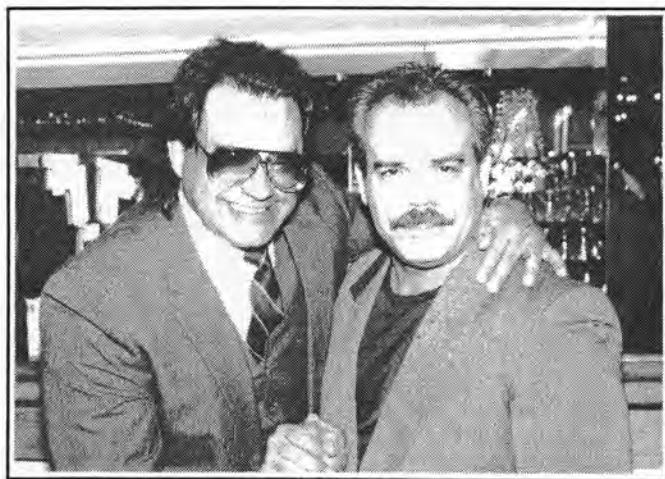
Ten days later, Ric Flair captured the world heavyweight championship for the seventh time, tying the all-time record, by pinning Sting at the Meadowlands in New Jersey. He's back on top today. But there's no way of knowing how long he will stay there. The same can be said of anyone. Wrestling, after all, shares that uncertainty with life itself.



Negro Casas vs. Yoshihiro Asai



Ninja Turtles



Chave and Mando Guerrero



Jake Tolos, Ox Andersen, Lord Blears, Dick "Destroyer" Beyer, Red Bastien

LUCHA LIBRE FOR BEGINNERS

HOW TO ENJOY GALAVISION

By Dave Meltzer

It's been written before that enjoying Lucha Libre is an acquired taste.

And that is probably so. For an American fan, weaned on American style, at first glance, Lucha Libre isn't the easiest form of wrestling to understand. The WWF work style, if that's what you call it, is based on exaggerated characters aimed at a six-year-old mentality. Now while that might not set well with someone who is, say seven or eight years old, it is as simple as a cartoon in its approach, thus easy to understand. While a nuclear physicist couldn't understand the NWA, it's not so much because the style is so complicated as much as the story-lines don't make sense because they change too often for even the most hardcore fans to make heads or tails out of what is going on. But the work in the ring is easy to understand and follow. Most American fans who see Japanese wrestling for the first time, even minus the interviews and exaggerated personas and getting past the lack of baby face / heel differentiation, respond immediately because of the high calibre of the action.

To the un-initiated eye, Lucha Libre makes little sense and it's not very easy to follow. It seems like a match has no rhyme nor reason. For years, I usually found Lucha Libre kind of dull, as much due to a lack of understanding of it as anything else. Sure, you could marvel in some of the hot moves, but you wouldn't stay glued to the set for a 20 minute match. I'd sometimes watch in small doses waiting for the mind-boggling flying moves or the hot high spots.

Sure, anyone could watch a videotape of the legendary 1987 Negro Casas vs. El Hijo del Santo hair vs. mask match from Los Angeles and get into it. But that's like showing someone the Ricky Steamboat-Randy Savage match from Wrestlemania that year and pretending all WWF wrestling is like that.

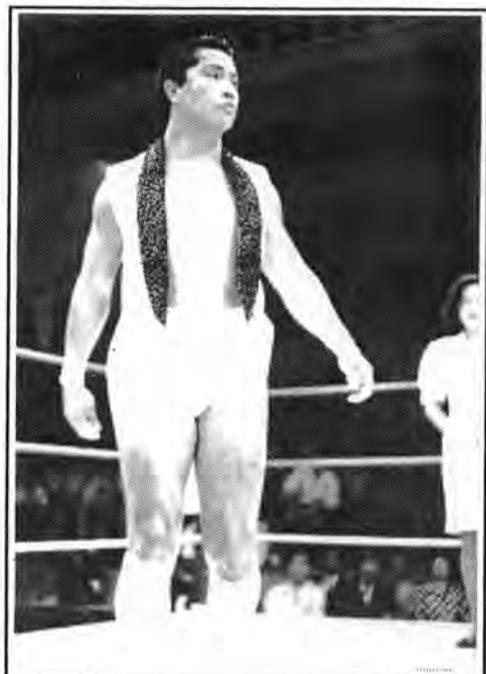
This past June, I had the opportunity to visit Japan during a Lucha Libre tour. The cards ranged from good-to-great, but if you think about it, they should have. When you hand-pick the best dozen or so wrestlers from a country, the result should be great action. But I began to acquire somewhat of a taste for Lucha Libre. At least I developed a healthy respect for the abilities of its top performers.

In recent months, I've begun looking forward to watching the weekly matches from

Mexico City more than any other weekly wrestling show in the United States. That's the same program I had steadfastly avoided for years because I couldn't make heads-or-tails out of what was going on

For those unfamiliar with the fact Lucha Libre is televised in the United States, the program airs every Sunday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern on the Galavision cable network. Galavision is available in a lot more homes than one would think and in most of the major metropolitan areas. Since it is a Spanish-language cable network, it is aimed primarily for the hispanic population in the Southwest.

The Galavision show is taped the prior Friday night at Arena Mexico, a 17,500 seat building in Mexico City. As far as live attendance goes, Mexico City is currently the No. 1 city for wrestling in the entire world. And the Friday night show at Arena Mexico is, more often than not, the most well-attended show of the week. The tickets to the shows are cheap in comparison to the U.S. or Japan, priced from \$1 to \$6. The show is the main weekly card of the EMLL, which is also called the NWA. It's one of two major groups in Mexico City, the other being the UWA. The wrestlers actually float back and forth between the two groups. It's not unusual at all to see a wrestler work on Friday night for the EMLL at



Negro Casas



Los Brazos and Hijo de Blue Demon

Arena Mexico, then work on Sunday on the UWA's big show of the week at El Toreo (the bullfighting arena) in the Mexico City suburb of Naucalpan. Rarely are the crowds for the twice-weekly Arena Mexico cards less than 10,000, and sellouts aren't uncommon.

To the unaided eye, there are a few things you would notice right off the bat about Lucha Libre. Unlike Japan, which is kind of a melting pot of styles and would be easy to follow for an American fan as a hardcore wrestling style but minus the interviews and exaggerated personas as maybe what the NWA would be if it developed its own product niche rather than tried to copy the WWF the Mexican style has a different look and feel. The difference in working from the right side of the body instead of the left is a small part of it, one that an American fan would subconsciously see as "wrong" but not fully comprehend as to why. But the entire psychology and pacing is different as well.

The first few things that will be ready apparent are that the wrestlers (or luchadores) are much smaller than your average American wrestler. Negro Casas, who is considered by just about everyone as Mexico's best worker, weighs about 175 pounds. El Hijo del Santo, the son of the most famous wrestler in the history of Mexico and currently the country's leading drawing card, weighs closer to 150 pounds. A few weigh more than 200 pounds. But the few legitimate heavyweights are generally short, fat men, the most exaggerated of which is Brazo de Plata, who weighs in the 300 pound range on a 5-foot-5 frame, but still has amazing agility, kind of like a younger and shorter Buddy Rose. Someone like Konnan, Dos Caras, Canek, or in his younger days, Mil Mascaras (who is still one of the two or three biggest drawing cards in Mexico, but only appeared on Galavision once during the past year) that look like body-builders are the exception. But in all of their cases, they became skilled wrestlers and fliers rather than relying strictly on their physiques.

Most of the matches are six-man tag team matches. And all of the matches are two out of three falls. A typical television show consists of four six-man tag team matches. There are a few "regular" trio teams, the most famous of which would be Los Brazos (El Brazo, Brazo de Oro & Brazo de Plata, who ironically at this writing

are the trios champions of the rival UWA, yet frequently appear on EMLL Friday night cards). But most seemingly are thrown together. At most points in time, each match is there to perpetuate one major feud. Generally one member of the tecnico (baby face) team and one member of the rudo (heel) team are being built up for a singles match down the road. The singles matches are few. Since they are few, virtually all the singles matches become something special. Most of the time, they result in popping a big house. Most often, U.S. style interviews don't take place, except occasionally to build up the big singles match, so it's two hours of straight wrestling with an occasional video feature thrown in.

The promotional strategy in the feuds is normally quite simple. The two men that feud are generally going to be blown off in one of four ways a mask vs. mask match (if both combatants have masks), a hair vs. hair or hair vs. mask match (if they involve either one or both wrestlers who don't wear masks), or a championship match if they involve one of the champions (the EMLL recognizes NWA "world" champions in the welterweight (Fuerza Guerrera), middleweight (Atlantis) and light-heavyweight (El Satanico) division technically its heavyweight champion would be the NWA's heavyweight champion in the United States but they probably haven't had an NWA heavyweight title match since the days of Lou Thesz). All feuds are eventually blown off with clean finishes. Outside interference disqualifications are seemingly unheard of.

The men involved in the feud generally dominate the heat in their respective match. Often, they'll juice. Rarely does juice involve men who aren't feuding. And usually, they'll be the men involved in the finish of the deciding fall. If they are building toward a title match, the challenger will usually gain clear-cut wins in tag matches leading up to the title match. For example, in the fall of 1990, the leading singles feud was between Atlantis, the most popular wrestler in the promotion and the NWA middleweight champion. He was feuding with Kung Fu, a long-time tecnico who turned on Atlantis in a tag team match his first week back in Mexico City. The two were on opposite sides of six-man matches week-after-week building to the blow-off. The last three weeks before the blow-off, the rudo, Kung Fu, either cleanly pinned or made Atlantis submit in the final fall. It ended up with a mask vs. mask match, which Atlantis won, and Kung Fu's identity was revealed.

If a heel holds a title belt, the situation would be reversed. The tecnico would score a few clean-cut wins over him in the tag team matches to build up to the title match. Often-times, the week before the title match, the tecnico will win with a stretch submission hold, and refuse to release the hold until the rudo has agreed to a title match the next week.

If there isn't a title belt at stake, and it's a mask vs. mask, mask vs. hair or hair vs. hair, the general rule is that the rudo will gain a clean win the last week before the big match (although they may have traded wins



El Santo Jr. vs. Fuerza Guerrera

back-and-forth in the final falls the previous weeks). In order for the tecnico to regain his heat and "save face," as it were, he immediately will issue the challenge and put up his hair or mask. The tecnicos generally, but not always, win the blow-off.

Once you learn the various characters and where they stand in the scheme of things, of course viewing the soap-opera week-to-week aspect of the show is much easier. But there is still the actual wrestling.

This takes some getting used to. Based on the opinion of someone who has seen virtually every wrestling style, my feeling on wrestling in Mexico is that it is similar to watching an independent show in the United States. Most of the wrestlers work hard. You don't feel anybody

is "phoning in" their performance. From a top-to-bottom standpoint, the quality of the wrestlers, in as far as the ability to work a good match, is below that of a top promotion in the U.S. or Japan. **There are exceptions, like Negro Casas, who takes a back seat to nobody when it comes to overall ability. But Casas almost never appears on Galavision.** **Most of the EMLL wrestlers aren't what one would call "complete."** Many can do certain things well, but few can do everything well. For example, Atlantis is a legendary flier (at least when he's operating on good knees) and does great high spots. But he's really not good at all in working a match. **Super Astro has a few super patented spots and dives and is a better wrestler than Atlantis, but he still needs a good rudo to have a top-notch match.** The two most "complete" wrestlers who appears regularly on television are rudo Pirata Morgan and tecnico El Dandy. Jerry Estrada, a rudo who appears every so often, is in that category as well while rudos, Emilio Charles, Jr. and Fuerza Guerrera are just a notch below. Most often, their portion of the match can be enjoyed even by someone with little knowledge of the Lucha Libre world. But one would still have problems with the rest of the match. The brawling is often weak when compared to American or Japanese style, particularly in the way the wrestlers sell for one another. And even with the best of the Luchadores when they were in Japan, the baby face selling aspect of the match, even with wrestlers of the calibre of Yoshihiro Asai didn't hold the fans attention. But they did pop like crazy for the comeback phase.

The rules in these six-mans are somewhat confusing. Each trio consists of two wrestlers and the captain, who is generally the biggest name of the three. To win a fall, the team has to either beat two members of a team, or beat the captain. Rarely will the captain lose unless it's the final fall. Most falls end with a member of one team gaining a pin or a submission, and then, usually immediately, his teammate puts a finisher on another member almost too predictably. It's only a rare occasion that they cross the fans up on this. Although the matches are called tag team matches, often wrestlers get in and out of the ring without tags, particularly when a rudo is knocked from the ring, he is immediately replaced, without a tag, by his partner. Oftentimes falls are gained by rudos doing a two-on-one or even a three-on-one



Los Tortuga Ninjas (Ninja Turtles)

submission hold, such as one rudo behind a tecnico grabbing his arms while his teammates each grab a leg and stretch until the guy submits. Everyone, no matter how big a star they may be, does jobs. At the beginning, those familiar with the U.S. scene might find it hard to comprehend the lead face in the promotion, like Atlantis, submitting cleanly in the final fall of the match. Other U.S. fans might find that refreshing, because in most cases you can't predict with any certainty which team will win and figure out which "weak link" in the trio will do the job or expect some sort of a cheap finish disqualification whenever big names appear on television. And while most of the matches have the teams split falls, it isn't all that unusual for a match to be won in straight falls, even sometimes by the rudos.

The highlight of the matches, usually occurring late in the third fall but sometimes earlier, are called "tope suicidios," or suicide dives. In layman's terms, the tope (pronounced tow-pay) is one of various forms of flashy dives through the ropes, over the ropes or off the ropes outside the ring. They are the moves that put the junior heavyweight division on the map in Japan.

Few American fans realize, that while not too many big-name American wrestlers appear in Mexico (a few, like Owen Hart, Kimala, Big Van Vader and the Samoan trio have in recent months), that many of the biggest names in Japan gained much of their training in Mexican rings. In Japan, the Lucha style isn't thought of as a complete wrestling style, but adding Lucha training to a Japanese foundation has added up to creating some of the best wrestlers in the world.

The wrestler who forever changed the way many fans viewed smaller men, Satoru Sayama (the original Tiger Mask), was a legend in Mexico before he ever set foot in Japan. In fact, although Sayama had extensive training in kick boxing (he even fought professionally) and submission wrestling (he was Karl Gotch's top student), what really got him over in 1981-83 as the biggest drawing small man in the history of pro wrestling was his acrobatic moves learned in Mexico. Sayama's tope's were at the time moves rarely seen in Japan and made him one of the most influential wrestlers of the era. But Sayama was hardly the only one.

When Riki Choshu first hit his stride as the hottest wrestler in Japan in 1982, he had returned from Mexico where he and Canek had traded back-and-forth the UWA world heavyweight belt. Mitsuharu Misawa and Shiro Koshinaka were a lighter weight tag team in Mexico in the early 80s as The Kamikaze and Samurai Shiro. Keiichi Yamada, who many consider the best all-around wrestler in the world today as the masked Jushin "Thunder" Riger, got his early training in Mexico. Naoki Sano, Kuniaki Kobayashi and George Takano all spent formative years in their career working in Mexico. Sano was the tag team partner of Yoshihiro Asai, who is the top Japanese wrestler working in Mexico today. Over the long haul, the most successful of the Japanese wrestlers in Mexico has been El Gran Hamada, who has spent most of his career in Mexico and has won many world championships in different weight divisions.

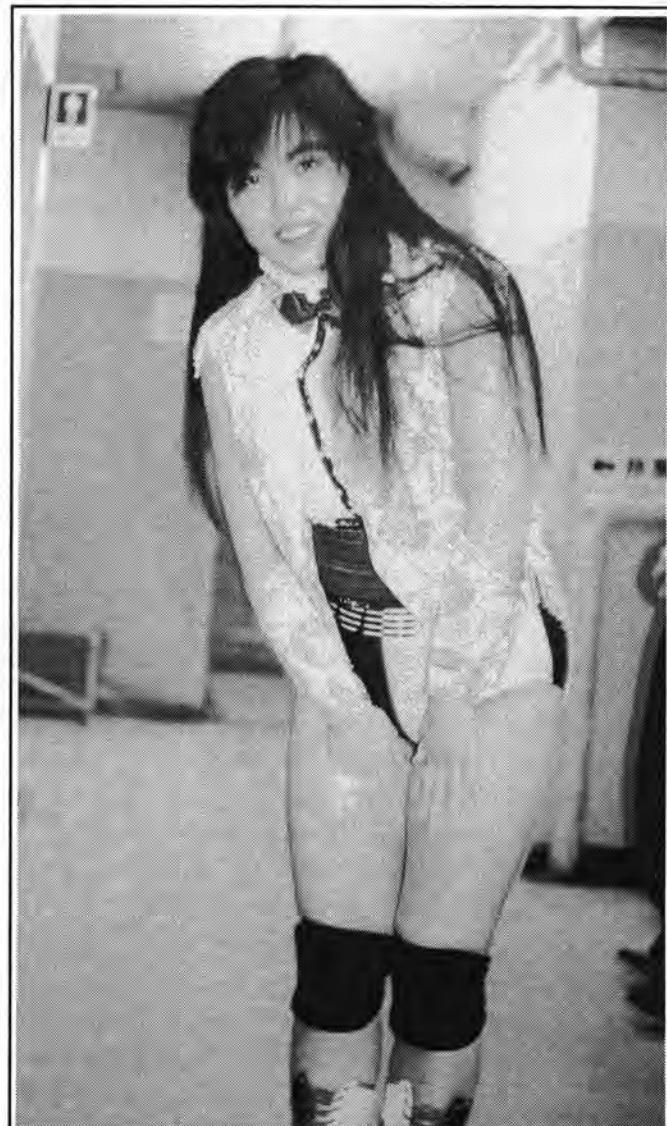
The first thing most people think of when it comes to Lucha Libre is masks. While masked wrestlers are out of vogue in most of the world today, in Mexico they are still the staple. Most wrestlers start out with masks, and eventually as their careers get going, wind up losing them to climax a feud. A few top names, like Canek, Dos Caras, Mil Mascaras, El Hijo Del Santo and others

will never lose when the mask is at stake. While the masks hide the facial expressions (which is why masked wrestlers have a difficult time getting over in the United States), most of the wrestlers wear unique masks. They are an advantage to older wrestlers as well, as with a mask and a full-body costume, it hides age.

While this would mean little to those of you who have never taken Spanish, but one of the highlights of the Lucha Libre shows is the announcing, particularly Dr. Alfonso Morales. Morales is like the Jim Ross of Mexico, but even more so. He's got a reputation in Mexico of being able to legitimize even the most bizarre of scenarios and in many circles is thought of as a better spokesman and representative of the wrestling business than the wrestlers. During a match, Morales frequently gives out historical data, and often doesn't hide the real names of the wrestlers. It isn't unusual at all for Morales to recall some of the legendary wrestlers of the past like Gory Guerrero (whose prime was in the '50s) or Satoru Sayama (who hasn't wrestled regularly in Mexico since 1981). It's a refreshing change for most announcers who ignore any occurrence that took place more than a month or two back. This respect for history helps in legitimizing championships and the business in general.



Manami Toyota



Noriyo Tateno

"YOU DON'T TAKE THAT STUFF SERIOUSLY, DO YOU?"

MORE THAN YOU CAN EVER IMAGINE — THE PLIGHT OF HARDCORE WRESTLING FANS

By Paul MacArthur

"I'm not much of one for cats, but if people told me that they display cats in cat shows, I wouldn't say that I hate cats and cat shows. People feel that they need to express their opinion about professional wrestling..."

Chris Cruise, Pro Wrestling Torch 11-16-89

While on a job interview this past August, my prospective employer read aloud one of my writing samples. It was an article I had written for a wrestling newsletter. I felt it was well-written and had no reservations about using it as an example of my written work.

"The Great Muta, Lex Luger, The Road Warriors, Sting," he sarcastically chimed, "I don't know how anyone could..." his voice trailed off before saying anything he thought might offend me. It was, of course, too late. At that point I determined I had no desire to work for him, not because he disliked pro wrestling, but because he assumed, like many others, wrestling fans were fair game for criticism.

We've all heard the criticisms many times before: "It's so fake..." "These guys aren't really hurting each other..." "How can you watch that garbage..." "They're just a bunch of football players who couldn't make it..." and the list goes on. Of course, this situation is only made worse when a non-wrestling fan enters the room and sees a badly missed move. It becomes hard to justify our love for the sport or argue the "It's so fake" phrase that will inevitably be thrown our direction. There isn't much we can do but shake our heads and hope they exit the room quickly so we can watch our sport without the pontifical statements of people who will never understand pro wrestling in the first place.

Wrestling fans are subjected to more ridicule and resentment than any other fan. Non-football fans don't tease, ridicule and berate football fans, even though they may dislike or not understand football. Boxing, baseball, karate, basketball or horse racing fans hardly find themselves in this position. These sports, like many others, are accepted by those who don't enjoy them. I used to swim competitively and occasionally I will watch a swim meet on television. As boring as swimming is to watch, nobody has ever criticized me for watching it. But when I flip the dial to pro wrestling, the criticism and insults become more prevalent than the bleached hair at the Olympic Swim Team tryouts.

The non-wrestling fan will spend a great deal of time telling us about pro wrestling's faults. He will try to educate us about what is real. We will be told the violence is gratuitous. Should we defend our position or have the nerve to say we accept pro wrestling for what it is, we will be told we are wasting our time, that somehow pro wrestling should be left to those who really believe everything they see. That, somehow, it would be better to watch a slice-and-dice horror film since there is no premise of reality. Somehow, we would be better off watching the real violence in boxing. In fact, the only waste of time is trying to explain why we like wrestling to people whose lack of understanding about the subject prevents them from every accepting any valid arguments.

The primary issue that causes the ridicule is what pro wrestling has evolved into. Every night, wrestlers put on a charade. They devise ingenious ways to create an illusion of violence used to continue or complete stories originated by confrontations or angles. Often it requires tremendous athletic skill. Many wrestlers put their bodies on the line and work with injuries that would sideline the average football player. The best wrestlers are a unique combination of athlete and stuntman. But, in the end, they are creating an intricate blend of sport and theater. In the end, the injuries are accidents. In the end, the same guys who despise each other in the ring may spend the next day driving to the next town together. In the end, what we see is a form of theater or, more accurately, a form of soap opera with athletic overtones.

While non-wrestling fans think we are idiots for enjoying pro wrestling, the wrestlers and the promoters think we are fools if we believe their charade. Yet, should we spend enough time to learn about the industry, the politics and begin to really understand the business, we will be resented and our presence becomes unwelcome. We are alone in that predicament. People who don't like pro wrestling look at us with disdain while the same people who make a living from the tickets, merchandise and pay-per-views we buy either think we are stupid or resent us.

The promoters seem to assume that the only people who can really enjoy pro wrestling are those who believe what they are seeing in the ring to be true combative sport. Fans who don't believe shouldn't watch. Those who do know should shut up or they'll expose the

business. Fans who have an understanding and discuss it are treated as the enemy. It is thought they are revealing secrets that will destroy the industry. It is thought this small segment is the only group that doesn't believe wrestling is 100 percent legitimate and should they discuss it, the other 99.9 percent, of the people, who believe wrestling is real, will all of a sudden find out and quit supporting it. Some feel the newsletter influence is so great that we have already caused the numerous problems the wrestling industry is currently facing. After all, the promoters could hardly blame themselves for the predicament they have put themselves into.

Yet, are there more devoted fans than the ones who read the sheets? Are there other fans who attend every house show, watch every pay-per-view, buy the various merchandise, spend their time and money to learn about the business; trade and purchase videotapes from wrestling promotions throughout the U.S. and foreign countries? Perhaps there are some. But few, if any are as devoted as the average newsletter reader. The problem is, we aren't wanted because we are perceived as a threat. Since when is someone who consistently supports your product a threat? Indeed, the worse newsletters can do is make the wrestlers and promoters accountable for their product. But few promoters and wrestlers wish to have any sort of accountability for their product. Accountability would involve accepting the responsibility for the failures as well as for the successes.

Times are changing. Some wrestlers and promoters will talk openly about the business to fans. Some have given very open and honest interviews in newsletters. I've had the pleasure of meeting and talking to some wrestlers who enjoyed discussing their profession with someone who had taken the time to learn about it. Many wrestlers read the newsletters and many younger wrestlers have

grown up realizing few people perceive wrestling to be a real contest. Perhaps a trend will develop. Many wrestling will adapt to the times and promoters will realize that few really believe, but the potential is there for millions to enjoy. There is a chance someday they won't aim their product at toothless wonders. It should happen soon as the crowds diminish and fewer people are finding anything positive to say about the profession. The continued attempts to alienate hardcore fans makes little business sense.

Between the constant insults from those who dislike wrestling and the resentment from those within the industry, it's a wonder that we can continue to enjoy wrestling. Teased by those outside, hated by those within. Is it worth the effort? It doesn't take me long to negate these arguments. I watch a Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat classic and I feel the joy and excitement only someone who understands what they are seeing can feel. I watch Terry Funk do almost anything and I find myself captivated. I watch the skilled teamwork of the Midnight Express and Jim Cornette and I see men who have worked hard to become the best in their chosen profession. I'm entertained by a well-booked angle. I see dedication and creativity when I watch the best wrestlers. I enjoy what these men do and respect them for it.

Finally, I think of the people who have become my friends over the past few years because we have a common interest in this crazy sport. Few things provide such phenomenal entertainment. Fewer are the foundation for such solid friendships. It's part of our lives that, even if we should lose interest in it, will always be important if only in memory. Few things in life are that valuable. Thankfully pro wrestling has provided us all with something that valuable. And it makes all the criticisms, insults and hassles trivial in comparison.



Fuerza Guerrera



Atsushi Onita

HARDCORE FANS AND THE WRESTLING BUSINESS

AN EDITORIAL

By Bruce Mitchell

1990 has been a pivotal year in many ways for the symbiotic relationship between hardcore wrestling fans and the business they take to heart so strongly. Hardcore fans, defined here as the people who religiously keep up with every aspect of the sport by patronizing newsletters and attending live matches as much as possible, have had more impact on the business than their sheer numbers would indicate. I believe this year has been different than any other because while the business itself has been in a decline, the newsletters are going through a growth and maturation process that is not without painful effect.

The WWF has been somewhat immune from any harm because Titan Sports is the largest, most professionally run wrestling organization in the country. Because of this, they don't make the kind of mistakes born of haste, poor communication, weak leadership or lack of resources that bedevil other groups. I doubt they will ever run the same segment twice in a row on one television show as has happened on WCW telecasts this year. They don't make as many blatant mistakes and they could probably care less if their wrestling is any good. Frankly, I'm pleasantly surprised when they have an entertaining match. I'm not disappointed with them very often because I never have high expectations of their product. Things are different for World Championship Wrestling. This is where the majority of impact and conflict has taken place.

Fans have tremendous power at live events, for better or for worse. Signs can say anything from "John 3:13" to "Queer Nation" to your favorite dirty word. If fans have not thought through implications of what they write on banners, rest assured promotions have. The WWF has resorted to just short of gunplay to prevent banners saying something they don't like from appearing on television or pay-per-view shows. I know from experience that WCW is sincere in not censoring this sort of expression. This puts fans in a position of responsibility, whether they like it or not. Fans have the power to screw up live events that effect the livelihood of many people. Disrupting a show can be a tremendous ego boost, but at what cost? Give some credit to WCW for being willing to risk embarrassment in order for its customers to have some fun. If WCW doesn't wish to be Mind Police, fans should respect that by not pushing the boundaries. Signs can be used to support wrestlers and angles that people like and not used to throw a kink into the works. At the last NWA card I attended, I was annoyed to see a sign that read: THE BLACK SCORPI-ON IS RIC FLAIR. STING IS STEVE BORDEN. That kind of a sign is inappropriately arrogant.

Just because someone has read something that most others haven't read doesn't make them smart. Smart fans can feel superior to "marks" in the same way the wrestlers do. They can also point out to anyone who shares society's normal view of wrestling fans that we don't fit that mold and like and accept pro wrestling for what it really is. But this attitude can spill over into our analysis. Hardcore fans often think they know all the answers and are incredibly critical of any mistake, even the small ones. At the same card, I watched several fans yell at WCW employees because one of the semi-main events never took place. Meanwhile, a four-star match was taking place right in front of their faces, a match that was much better than the missing match could possibly have ever been.

There are limits. Take the Art Barr situation. In some cities, fans chanted "rapist" at him. Newsletters and newspapers had reported on his criminal case. Rightfully so. WCW thought they could hire him and nothing would be said about it because that's the way the wrestling business was years back. But today, that was an unrealistic expectation. Fans have a responsibility to act like human beings. This criminal incident should not be grist for those at ringside to entertain themselves. I seriously question whether the fans who did this truly cared about the victim at all. They just saw a chance to get under somebody's skin. If fans didn't want Art Barr employed by WCW, they could have written the company, picketed the arena, not purchased tickets to shows he was on or protested in other ways. Reducing this incident to heckling demeaned it and trivialized it as much as hiring Art Barr to be a kiddie idol did.

Personal tragedies are very painful to the people involved. We have all been alternatively amused and repulsed by the Von Erich family's hypocritical attempts to market their legitimately tragic family history. That doesn't give anyone license to ignore any shred of human decency when attending their matches. Wrestlers are people, too. I shudder to think of the abuse Kerry Von Erich has taken over the years from hecklers. Would anyone want people heckling them at work about their brother's funeral? It is one thing to give it to a guy if his irresponsible behavior has affected his ring performance and he's not in condition to perform. It's another to use someone else's pain for your own amusement. Wrestlers have a right to some personal respect and privacy. This isn't to say fans shouldn't heckle, yell, needle or otherwise act wild at matches. After all, it is their money and the right to yell and scream is part of what a wrestling ticket pays for.

Wrestlers and promoters should get nailed for bad matches, dishonesty and other shoddy business practices. And they do, because hardcore fans enjoy complaining. In the case of WCW, some of the bitching is born of impatience. Fans are tired of waiting for WCW to get its act together. Some bitch so much they seem to forget WCW does do things aimed for hardcore fans. We are so used to the screw-ups that we don't recognize there are things done in the company aimed at hardcore fans. Of course, the other side can be just as bad. Many wrestlers and management employees are so desperate to hang onto the idea that they, and they alone, are the only ones who know anything about wrestling, despite evidence to the contrary. Some resent suggestions from the outside, even ones that would make them money. To many in wrestling, pride seems more important than profit. In a recession, a business should be alert to anything that would help make them money, and should accept good ideas, no matter where the ideas originate from.

Entertainment companies have the right to keep secrets. One place newsletters face legitimate criticism is the effect of reporting the outcome of matches before they take place. Newspapers and magazines use this discretion in reviewing books and movies. No responsible reviewer would reveal the end of "Godfather III" or the solution to the latest murder mystery on the best seller list. The finish to the last Wrestlemania was well-known within the wrestling business. It was reported ahead of time in a wire service story picked up by newspapers across the country. But none of the established sheets revealed the finish ahead of time. The editors used good judgement in this case. I'm not suggesting angles shouldn't be reported ahead of time. When I read about an angle beforehand, it only makes me want to see it myself, particularly if it sounds like a good one, and even if it doesn't I want to see for myself. Most fans want to see things to make their own decisions.

An incident occurred in Baltimore during the Black Scorpion angle. During his match with Sting, fans were chanting "Moondog Rex" at him. The next night, in Philadelphia, Bill Irwin was flown in to take his place. WCW was angry about the incident and blamed newsletters for fans recognizing Scorpion as Moondog. As it happened, there had been nothing in any newsletters before that time (this was Culley's first week as Scorpion) about Culley being the Scorpion. But fans are aware of characteristics of different wrestlers that work for the promotion. Fans know many more different wrestlers because of cable. In short, thinking people wouldn't know it was Culley was a bad idea. Sting vs. Culley is not a main-event match for a major arena. Fans were right to be angry. And the fans complained the best way they could, by chanting his name, or buy not buying tickets to the next show. If the promotions can't get away with some tricks that used to work in the past because fans don't fall for them any more, in the long

run that is better for wrestling. Wrestling journalism isn't going to go away and the clock isn't going to be turned back. That has to be accepted. If Dave Meltzer hadn't have started the Observer eight years ago, somebody else would have done the same thing and the end result would be the same. As wrestling became marketed mainstream, coverage of wrestling in a truthful, journalistic manner was inevitable.

Newsletters are now in the process of maturation. For a newsletter to be successful today it has to have its niche in the market. Some are humorous. Some straight news. Some nostalgic. Some regional. A half-assed newsletter will get half-assed support. The sports, business and political world cooperate with the press in various ways in exchange for access. Normal give-and-take can be achieved without either side compromising any credibility. This is already the case in many instances. Those in the business are going to have to accept thoughtful, critical analysis and not expect a blind eye to be turned when they make mistakes or exercise poor judgement. The one way newsletters can be "good for the business" is to tell the truth and to hold promotions to certain standards and to not shill. It does no good to explain away mistakes or sleaziness if nobody believes they are true because the newsletter has no credibility. If positive changes are made because of things in newsletters, then the business benefits. The growth of the wrestling press is just an indication of wrestling's slow slide into acceptance for what it really is. Things are not going back to the way they were. That either gives wrestling a great opportunity for acceptance for what it really is and growth in that direction; or it is an albatross around the neck of the wrestling business that won't adapt to changes. Perspective, in this case, may determine success or failure.

Hardcore fans and those in the wrestling business need to recognize they share most of the same goals. Fans want, almost desperately at times, to see the business successful. They spend a tremendous amount of money supporting that cause. The voices should be listened to, because they are the most loyal customers. At the same time, hardcore fans have to realize that they aren't the only customers. People within the wrestling business are under tremendous pressure, some brought upon themselves and some brought upon from the outside. Because people read newsletters, they aren't experts on the wrestling business. Everyone in every position has things about the business they don't know and things they can learn. Everyone has the same goal. Hot, sellout crowds and great shows. Hardcore fans want to see the business successful because if they didn't like the wrestling business, they wouldn't be fans in the first place. Both sides need to lose the tremendous paranoia and distrust. The promotions provide us with entertainment, sometimes great entertainment, sometimes not. We provide them with money. Since neither is going away, both sides should work at co-existing.

THE EVOLUTION OF NEWSLETTERS

By Mike Tenay

The evolution of wrestling newsletters in the past few years has been absolutely amazing.

While fan club bulletins date back to before the '40s, this new breed of wrestling journalism has forced the major promotions to take notice and be held accountable for their actions.

Professional wrestling has long lived a charmed existence. Unlike any other form of sports or entertainment, promoters have had free reign to con the marks.

While promotion's claims (read that lies) about injuries, phantom title changes, no-shows — it certainly doesn't end there — will never cease, there are signs that things are slowly changing.

When scandal exists, be it the UNLV college basketball investigations, the Pete Rose sage or NFL point spread improprieties, the journalists jump into action.

Between Dave Meltzer's Observer and National column, Matwatch's Steve Beverly's close association with the NWA front office and Wade Keller's Torch Talk interviews have forced promotions today to deal with something they've been able to ignore in the past. The truth.

As Meltzer's National column gained prominence in 1990, more people than ever became aware and exposed to what pro wrestling really was.

"There has been an attempt by the major promotions to not be as blatantly dishonest as they've been in the past," Meltzer said. "The promotions are aware that if they do something dishonest, they will be held accountable for it. Nobody wants to be referred to as a dishonest businessman."

Previous WWF policy in regard to injuries and no-shows has been subject to ridicule.

When Tully Blanchard (fired) and Barry Windham (quit) missed the November 1989 Survivor Series pay-per-view card, a mere day-of-the-show mention of "dissension in the Bobby Heenan family," was the lone reference, despite the promotion knowing weeks ahead of time that neither would appear. The fact that neither would show up for the card was revealed weeks ahead of time in the major newsletters.

What a difference a year makes. Fast forward to December 1990. On the WWF Superstars syndicated television show, Vince McMahon announced weeks in advance that Andre the Giant would be forced to miss this year's Royal Rumble because of a leg injury suffered in Japan.

"After never being held accountable in the past, newsletters are bound to have some affect on the promotions, even if it's just a subconscious affect," Meltzer said.

Television news director Steve Beverly added a new dimension to the newsletter world with "Matwatch,"

offering behind-the-scenes insight with a television slant.

Beverly's well-publicized association with the NWA, including appearing on its 900 number, has given him accessibility to NWA chiefs Jack Petrik and Jim Herd.

"Newsletter editors are looked upon as parasites by many in the wrestling business. We certainly have some influence, but probably not a lot. It is certainly true that newsletters are scrutinized thoroughly by the front offices. Some executives will yellow-line parts of newsletters and ask, 'Why are we doing this?'

"We are the conscience of the hardcore fan, but if we had such an influence on wrestling, people would have been more alert to the well-pointed-out warning signs and you wouldn't have been such a drastic drop in business. However, I know that promotions use newsletters as a barometer and even one admitted to being influenced in their choices for television color commentators.

"Our audience goes beyond the hardcore," Beverly continued. "Why else would there be such a voracious appetite by entertainment editors of major newspapers across the country to include weekly wrestling columns?"

Because of his close association with WCW, Beverly feels that the group was "definitely more honest, or at least they didn't lie to the degree they might have."

But the true feelings from many in the company are reflected when Beverly noted, "After the first week of promotion, I was never again mentioned on-air by a WCW announcer. Many weeks I was the top week-night draw on the hot-line, all without promotional support."

Wade Keller has made strong inroads with the Torch Weekly, most notably with an expert line-up of columnists and his Torch Talk interview segments.

Keller's ability to put his subjects in a talkative, almost off-the-record mood has brought increased attention to his newsletter.

"The Torch interviews have been a chain reaction," Keller explained. "I never try to lead them in any direction and always try to make them feel comfortable. The business is so much more laid back toward the fake issue since Vince McMahon exposed the business, that personalities are more willing to come out of character for their interviews and realize that this is just a business with athletics involved."

Beverly agrees to the chain reaction theory. "Once a taboo is broken, it falls. Once two or three talk and nobody gets fired, others will do it."

Keller feels that, "While newsletters have legitimized covering wrestling as a business, we need more credibility in the promotions. In the 60s, there was so much more under-the-table stuff, and newsletters are part of

the change. Promotions feel it is better to talk to the newsletters and have accurate information rather than speculation. The promotions should use the press to their best advantage.

"Newsletters are the only legitimate wrestling press there is," Keller said. "And I agree with the theory that if pro wrestling can't survive the truth, then it shouldn't survive at all."

Jeff Walton has had unique experiences in all facets of the wrestling business. He published the World Wide Freddie Blassie fanzine from 1963 to 1969. His cross-over into the wrestling profession covered every facet of the business, from public relations director to television announcer to promoter to booker (with Mike LeBelle's California promotion) to manager and wrestler (as Tux Newman in Memphis) to magazine editor (for the WWF).

Walton offers a dissenting viewpoint when it comes to the impact the newsletters make on the promotions. "The newsletters will never change the wrestling business. For example, no-shows have always and will always be a part of it. It's been going on since Day One. And it will continue to go on. In all my years of promotion, if we knew a guy wasn't going to be there and had already advertised that he was, it served no purpose to publicize that he wouldn't show. Sometimes doctors stopped guys from working. Sometimes the guys showed up drunk. But whatever the reason, you just announce that his plane was late and make refunds available. And you know what? Nobody will ever get a refund. The motto is, 'Save your dollar and don't ever give it back.'"

Even though he is no longer associated with the wrestling business, Walton follows its exploits through the newsletters. "I find the wrestling newsletters today just incredible. I subscribe to the big three and find Dave, Steve and Wade to be very, very knowledgeable. Strides

have definitely been made on an intellectual level and all are very informative and diversified."

Walton commented on the more open tone of today's wrestlers. "For so long, this was a closed business. Closed, not to fool people, but to protect what was a very tough profession. Wrestlers prided themselves on keeping it a secret. To those from the old school of the 50s and 60s, today's business is a joke. Times and wrestlers, however, have changed. They are much more willing to talk today because they either don't know about past history or just don't care. Given a little history lesson, their attitudes might change."

John Cherwa, associate sports editor and head of the investigative team for the Los Angeles Times, has been a 25-plus year wrestling fan and longtime newsletter reader. "While it hasn't yet reached the level of a major daily paper, the quality of newsletter reporting, from a journalistic standpoint, is quite good. However, the larger a publication gets, the more careful it has to be. For instance, the Los Angeles Times would have a hard time reporting that Hulk Hogan took steroids."

To Cherwa, "Beverly being on the WCW 900-line was the biggest sign of newsletter acceptance by a major promotion. But the key to Titan Sports responding to the press is Dave Meltzer's National column, which really is the first venture into a mainstream audience."

"In regards to no-shows at major events, I wouldn't mind seeing a class action suit, brought on by fans, to keep promotions in line. Through the years it has been criminal how fraudulent some of these promoters have been. The move by Vince McMahon to turn athletics into entertainment puts him close into being liable for fraudulent advertising. There are more strident rules in this area."

Cherwa also advises that the conservative Los Angeles Times is considering a background information type feature on pro wrestling prior to Wrestlemania.



Yoshihiro Asai vs. Negro Casas



Keiji Muto vs. Osamu Kido

"YOU ARE TOO SMALL. YOU'RE NOT MADE TO BE A WRESTLER."

THE DAY THE SMALL MAN BECAME KING OF THE BIG MAN'S WORLD

By Dave Meltzer

When Keiichi Yamada was 13 years old, growing up in Hiroshima, Japan, he had a clear vision of his destiny in life.

Someday, he would be a pro wrestler. Not only that, but someday he'd be the best pro wrestler in the world.

From that point forward, Yamada totally lived for that one goal. He took up amateur wrestling. He hit the weights. He watched all the wrestling he could on television.

His dedication was so complete that few who knew him would have questioned that some day he would be a pro wrestler. Except for one thing. He was too small. All the mat work and all the weights can't make up for what nature won't give you. In Yamada's case, nature wasn't unkind. Yamada was given almost every ingredient one needed to be a wrestler. Quickness, coordination, all-around dexterity, and the potential to develop strength and an impressive physique. What nature can't give you, things like heart, desire and fearlessness, he had in abundance. But like a cruel practical joke, nature forgot one thing. Height.

In the 70s, the top wrestling stars in Japan were people like Antonio Inoki, Seiji Sakaguchi, Giant Baba and Jumbo Tsuruta all six feet tall or more. There was no such thing as a junior heavyweight division or a junior heavyweight championship. While there were shorter men in wrestling, they were generally thick, stocky, ex-sumo wrestlers.

In 1978, roughly the time Yamada decided he wanted to be a wrestler, things started changing. New Japan created the junior heavyweight division as a means to push Tatsumi Fujinami, who they were grooming to be Inoki's understudy. This opened the door for smaller foreigners to be brought in and given a push. In 1979, a British wrestler, who had migrated to Canada, the Dynamite Kid, made his Japan debut as a rival for Fujinami's world junior heavyweight title. What was significant about this was the Kid, then just 20-years-old and maybe 175 pounds, was the lightest wrestler to achieve a measure of stardom in Japan in many years. He became Yamada's idol. But even Dynamite Kid was 5-foot-8 or so.

By the time Keiichi Yamada was in high school, no doubt he would have silenced any neighborhood skeptics if it hadn't been for his height. He was the star of his high school wrestling team. Even though he stood 5-foot-3, all of his weight lifting had given him a muscular

physique. Particularly impressive were his shoulders, since he specialized in movements like overhead presses and power cleans. His power and dedication to wrestling showed. As a junior, in 1981, he went all the way to the national high school tournament in the 165-pound weight class. In the tournament he got knocked off by a senior from Tichigi named Toshiaki Kawada, who went on to win the championship. He went to nationals as a senior as well, but by this time his mind was completely on professional wrestling. In the schoolyard, he used to practice things like jumping off things with diving headbutts, dropkicks and cross-body blocks. At this time, these, along with the fast suplex, were moves unique to Dynamite Kid, whose young age, big shoulders, lack of height and great ability gave Yamada something to emulate.

So after graduating high school, he went to the New Japan office to inquire about becoming a wrestler. Kotetsu Yamamoto, an ex-wrestler who was head trainer at the New Japan wrestling school and was also the color commentator on New Japan's television show, took one look at Yamada and told him, words to the effect of, "You are way too small. You're just not made to be a wrestler."

Well, that should have put a damper on his spirit and dashed his dreams. But the truth is, Yamada had an alternative plan. When he was in school, his room at home was filled with masks. All the big names from Mexico from Mil Mascaras to Blue Demon to El Solitario. Yamada knew that in Mexico, he wouldn't be too small. So ever since he was 13, he had saved his money. And shortly after his first meeting with Yamamoto, he took his life savings and packed up for Mexico City. He forgot one thing in his plans. He never took Spanish. So Yamada wound up in Mexico City at a wrestling school. But between homesickness, no work and the language barrier, Mexico City wasn't what his dreams cracked it up to be.

THE CHANCE

He had run out of money and was nearly at the end of his rope. But luckily, New Japan had a foreign television taping set for El Toreo in the Mexico City suburb of Naucalpan in June of 1983. Yamada went up to Yamamoto at the taping, who still thought he was too small, but admired his initiative for going all the way to Mexico

to try and become a wrestler. After talking with both Yamamoto and Fujinami, and giving them his amateur credentials, they agreed to take him back with them and give him an audition.

New Japan generally holds training sessions every year or so. There are lots of applicants, who send in resumes, listing their athletic achievements. They are put through calisthenic type workouts, testing strength, speed and stamina. Others, like the occasional Olympic wrestler or top-flight amateur in another sport, are recruited into the school. Out of a few hundred applicants each year, maybe a half-dozen are accepted into the school. About half of them never make it to their first match. The students live in a dormitory-like environment called a dojo, and besides being taught to wrestle, their job is to keep the gym clean, set up the arena on the road, work as security, wash the backs of the veterans, wake up the Americans to make sure they aren't late for the bus to the next city, etc.

DYNAMITE JUNIOR

Yamada made his pro debut on March 3, 1984 in Tokyo, pinning wrestling school classmate Naoki Sano, who was also making his debut that night. One wonders if anyone watching that match realized that in five-and-a-half years, these two would be having some of the best matches in modern wrestling history against one another.

The wrestling crowds in Japan were quite a bit different six years ago. The audience was somewhat smart, but nothing like today's Tokyo crowds. The original UWF was just being formed and with it, the public started to become educated to the difference between showy holds and legitimate holds. Few fans paid attention to preliminary matches then. Cards started at 6:30 p.m. most nights, and few fans knew the names, nor even paid attention to the first few matches on a card. Many, coming right after work, would arrive late. Kids often crowded around either the souvenir table or the foreign dressing rooms, hoping to get a glimpse and crowd around one of the big-name imports who might come out to get a breather or watch one of the prelim boys. It's not like today where the fans are serious about watching every match on a card, and even the opening match, if it's exciting, will get the fans screaming and stomping their feet. So the fact that Yamada gained a following in his first year was a lot more impressive in those days than it would be today, when fans immediately get behind a hard-working newcomer.

Most Japanese wrestlers, particularly the prelim boys, wore black tights and black boots. Yamada, who was into designing color-coordinated wrestling costumes dating back to being a teenager and being a fan of the colorful costumes of the Mexican wrestlers, was a little different. He'd wear long blue tights, sometimes with a tank top. Much of it was patterned after the ring wear of the Dynamite Kid. Yamada quickly got the nickname, "The Japanese Dynamite Kid," by the fans, and the Japanese wrestlers used to rib him and call him "Dynamite Junior." Some of the Americans used to call him "Frankie," short for Frankenstein because he had short hair in those days, cut like Frankenstein. In the ring, from his very first match, he would do most of Dynamite Kid's repertoire, using the diving head-butt off the top rope as his finisher. He was able to do consistent three-star quality matches almost from the very beginning. He

tied with Tom Zenk in the Wrestling Observer's 1984 rookie of the year balloting.

Back in those days, every few years or so New Japan would organize a "Young Lions tournament." All the prelim guys who had been wrestling three years or less, who, since there was little focus or interest in prelim bouts in those days, were basically unknown to most fans, would be put in a tournament and the newspapers and magazines would report daily on the happenings. It's the first real publicity most would get. Since it was a tournament, fans would follow the standings. The matches, particularly toward the end, would generate a lot of interest. In April of 1985, Yamada had his first taste of real exposure in the tournament.

It's interesting to look back at the names in that tournament. Besides Yamada, there was Keiji Muto, Masa Chono, Shinya Hashimoto and Masaharu Funaki, all of whom are now the rising stars being primed to dominate the wrestling business in Japan. Yamada was the star of the tournament, but lost in the finals to Shunji Kosugi, who ironically, never made it big.

GOING ON TOUR

By early 1986, Yamada's matches were the highlight of the New Japan under-cards. After a televised four-star match with The Black Tiger (One of England's top heels, Mark "Rollerball" Rocco), Rocco was so impressed he wanted to bring Yamada to England and work a program with him.

In Japan, the philosophy of the promoters is that you can't take a young guy who has been a prelim wrestler and suddenly have the fans accept him as a top star. So when the young wrestler shows potential, they're sent away for a while. When they come back, they are packaged differently, maybe given a new ring costume, a new finishing move or just have a new hairstyle to make fans think they are new and improved. So Yamada was sent to England.

The British promoters came up with the name "Flying Fuji Yamada," and he and Rollerball had the best matches in the country, with Yamada winning Rocco's World Heavy Middleweight (189 pounds) championship on September 26, 1986. When the program had run its course, in April of 1987, Rocco regained the title and Yamada left for Calgary.

"He was a real asset to our territory," remembered Bruce Hart, who was the booker at the time. "He was a lot like Dynamite Kid in that he brought everyone's work rate up. In both cases, because of their size, they felt compelled to work twice as hard as everyone else to make up for their shortcomings. He had a great match day-in and day-out no matter what the size of the crowd. It rubbed off on everyone else because he was in prelim matches and guys like Owen (Hart), (Brian) Pillman and (Chris) Benoit, who were just developing at the time, had to follow him."

Another wrestler remembered Yamada as "a real polite guy. He was always bowing to you. He really got into it when we taught him dirty jokes. But, boy he trained like a mad man. He always trained with heavy weights."

Others remembered that after matches, Yamada and Hiroshi Hase would often stay up until 5 a.m. watching wrestling videotapes with their coach, Mr. Hito.

THE SHOOTING STAR

After a few months in Western Canada, where Yamada had everything from opening matches to main events, it was time to come back home. The big return was August 19, 1987 as part of the "Summer Night Fever" junior heavyweight tournament at the Tokyo Sumo Hall. Yamada lost his first match back he was scheduled against Nobuhiko Takada in the first round of the tournament. A week later, in Tokyo's Korakuen Hall, he first displayed his "shooting star press" in a tag team match where he teamed with Muto against Black Tiger and Owen Hart. The "shooting star press" became Yamada's patented finisher, he would come off the top rope, leap up high, positioning his body so it appeared he'd splash back-first on his opponent. But in the air, as if he was like a cat, he did a full flip and landed with a front-ward splash. It's a spectacular finishing move than no other wrestler has been able to duplicate. A few have tried in the gym, but usually quit after landing on their heads once or twice.

Most of 1988 was spent in Japan as a contender for the junior heavyweight title. Yamada had sensational title challenges against all three champions during the year Hiroshi Hase, Owen Hart and Shiro Koshinaka. While he never got the title, he was acknowledged as one of the best workers in the business. He was ranked No. 5 in the world, trailing only Ric Flair, Tatsumi Fujinami, Barry Windham and Ted DiBiase in the 1988 Observer yearbook. When he wasn't in the ring, he was in the gym. Yamada and Funaki went every day learning wrestling moves from Yoshiaki Fujiwara, studying koppo karate, hitting the weights and doing the aerobic training as if both were still rookies.

"He's really self-disciplined in everything he does, more than almost anyone else," noted one of the top wrestlers in Japan. "Every since he started, he trained harder than anyone else. He was the first guy in the dojo (gym) in the morning and the last one out.

"He never dogged it in the gym. If we had to do 500 squats, some guys will cheat in their counting or do lazy squats. But he went all out to make every squat count. He was very dedicated to his weight lifting. A lot of the young wrestlers (in Japan) just do the calisthenics, the stretching and the running but don't do the weights. After the calisthenics, they're already tired. But he had so much energy. He'd hit the weights hard after finishing the normal workout."

JUSHIN RIGER

In the fall of 1988, TV-Asahi, which broadcasts the New Japan wrestling matches, introduced a new children's cartoon television show called Jushin Riger. Jushin is Japanese for "God of Animals." Riger is a combination of the words Lion and Tiger, so it's actually pronounced "Liger." Several years earlier, Tiger Mask, which was one of the most popular cartoons in Japan for a decade, had a wrestling character created for kids to be a real-life Tiger Mask. To say that idea was a major success would be to underestimate the obvious.

So the network wanted to duplicate the success of Tiger Mask. In the five years since Satoru Sayama quit New Japan, the promotion's interest among kids had dropped

quite a bit. Indeed, even though the TV network came up with the idea for a wrestler to play Jushin Riger, the wrestling office was thinking in the same direction.

So when the network wanted to create a real-life Jushin Riger, New Japan president Seiji Sakaguchi told them that he had the perfect candidate. Well, you couldn't immediately have this distinctive Keiichi Yamada, who was already one of the most popular wrestlers in Japan, put on a costume tomorrow and suddenly be somebody new. So in December of 1988, after losing a title match to Koshinaka, fans were told that Flying Fuji Yamada was going back to Europe for two years.

Few know that Yamada himself designed the Jushin Riger costumes. He changes the costume every few months when he gets a new idea to add to it. While a famous Japanese comic book artist came up with the original concept of the costume (the same one who came up with the Big Van Vader costume), it was Yamada who sketched out his own ideas and has been responsible for the gradual changing of the costume. Because his character was a combination of a lion and tiger, the office wanted him to wear a long-haired wig into the ring, but he decided instead to let his own hair grow long.

Five months later, Jushin Riger was introduced at the Tokyo Dome before 53,800 fans, defeating Kuniaki Kobayashi in a disappointing match. Yamada wasn't used to wrestling with the heavy ring costume and it affected his stamina. But it didn't take him long to get used to the costume. He's had few disappointing matches since. One month after his debut, Jushin Riger captured the IWGP world junior heavyweight title from Hase in Osaka. On July 13, he had his first singles title defense against Naoki Sano in Tokyo the same wrestler he went to wrestling school with and he made his pro debut against. The match ended with a double knockout finish. In the August 10 rematch, he put Sano over clean in the middle. The Sano matches were genuine classics. And Jushin Riger finished the year rated No. 2 in the world, trailing only Ric Flair, the greatest wrestler of the era, who arguably, had just finished the best year of his career.

"He's both a harder trainer and a better athlete," said one wrestler in explaining why he believes Riger is the best worker in Japan. "He's a great natural athlete. You can tell by his success in amateur wrestling. But he's also got that drive. He constantly wants to prove himself to everyone even though he's already proven himself to everyone.

"He's the best guy to work with. Any spot or move you can think of, he's willing to do. If you tell him you want to suplex him off the top rope to the floor, he'd try it. Most wrestlers will say 'no' to certain things, but he'll do anything and make it look great the first time he tries it. He's very flexible as a worker in that he can work any style."

In September, TV-Asahi canceled the cartoon show after one season. The cartoon character of Jushin Riger wasn't a big hit. But the wrestler was. Yamada became the gimmick and this past January, he even changed the name of the gimmick to Jushin "Thunder" Riger. Unlike Sayama and later Mitsuhiro Misawa, who were copies of one of Japan's most famous cartoons, Yamada's popularity as Riger far exceeded the original cartoon.

"As far as actual crowd reactions, he's every bit as over if not more over than anyone in Japan," said a foreigner

who regularly works Japan. "The fans there know with his match no matter what, they're always going to get their money's worth."

COMPARISONS WITH SAYAMA

Although Yamada broke into wrestling emulating Dynamite Kid, it is Kid's arch-rival, the original Tiger Mask (Satoru Sayama) with whom he is most-often compared.

Certainly when it comes to today's acrobatic style of junior heavyweight wrestling mixed in with genuine wrestling moves, the two, along with Dynamite Kid, stand head and shoulders above the rest as the best small men of the era. While Sayama was certainly a more noteworthy and influential figure in pro wrestling history, when it comes to ring work, Riger has surpassed him.

"Talent-wise, he's no less than Sayama," said one person familiar with both. "The difference is Yamada loves wrestling. Sayama always had doubts about wrestling. He (Sayama) really wanted to do kicking and martial arts, but Yamada grew up wanting to be nothing but a wrestler."

At the same time, Sayama was the first, and in some people's eyes, no matter what Riger does, he'll never be as good as Tiger Mask. Just as no matter what the videotape shows, there are fans who will swear that Argentina Rocca was better than Tiger Mask.

When comparing the two, certainly Sayama was quicker. And he was more popular, since he was known and viewed by everyone, whether they were wrestling fans or not. You have to remember that when Sayama was in his heyday, New Japan Pro Wrestling was in Prime Time and it wasn't unusual for it to draw a 20 or a 25 rating. So Tiger Mask was a major celebrity. Jushin Riger is simply a very popular wrestler since today, the television is on Saturday afternoon and the audience is one-third as large.

But Yamada has been more accepted by the hardcore wrestling fans. Surprising as this sounds today, when Tiger Mask was first introduced in 1981, the hardcore fans didn't like him. Remember, almost all Japanese wrestlers wore black boots, black tights. Riki Choshu, with long hair and white boots was flamboyant by those standards. In the beginning, it was considered "cool" to dislike Tiger Mask, and proclaim his as strictly a gimmick for young kids. But Sayama was so good, that eventually the hardcores had to admit it and respect him for it. Yamada already had the respect of the hardcores long before he was Jushin Riger. By no means is Jushin Riger today a wrestler for kids. The hardcores loved him from the start. The kids loved his flying moves.

"Even without the gimmick, he would have been every bit as big of a star," said one Japanese reporter. "Without a mask, he would have been kind of the junior heavyweight version of Muto. The good-looking young-guy with all the hot moves."

But Yamada is the better all-around worker. Sayama did incredible moves. Yamada does incredible matches. Sure, the Sayama-Dynamite Kid matches are among the best ever, but Yamada has had a lot more matches near that quality. Sayama had bad matches and missed moves in the ring. He also had a difficult time in working with certain opponents. Yamada almost never has a bad

match, rarely misses moves and while his style isn't quite as electrifying, he's able to work well with a wider variety of opponents. Unlike Sayama, he can even interact well with super-heavyweights like Bam Bam Bigelow and Big Van Vader. Sayama was kept away from the big guys after his first year as Tiger Mask. When he was put in with someone the size of a Don Muraco, it began to ruin the illusion because of the size difference. In Yamada's case, the size difference works to his advantage because he can work believable and exciting spots with the big guys and get over as a fearless kamikaze underdog.

"I wouldn't want to compare the two," said one wrestler familiar with both. "But of the two, Riger is more solid and his matches are more believable. Tiger had more flexibility and did more flips."

As far as a comparison with Dynamite Kid, his idol, one would hope the final story on both won't be similar. Like Yamada, Kid was just about the best wrestler in the world when he was in his mid-'20s. But his crazy maneuvers caught up with him, and now, at 32, he's a shell of what he once was.

"He'll probably last longer," theorizes Bruce Hart, who has seen both at similar stages of their career. "Watching Yamada, he seems less brittle than Dynamite. I don't think he's done any 'roids. He's done some crazy destructive stuff but he seems to have avoided any kind of a serious injury. Dynamite was always getting hurt. A big difference is flexibility. That was Dynamite's problem. Yamada does a lot of high-risk stuff, but he does it in a safe way, if that makes sense. But when you wrestle that style, you never know."

STATUS AS WRESTLING'S BEST

What is the Wrestler of the Year? What is the Most Valuable Player in baseball? Usually it's given to a key player on a championship team. But there are always arguments when the best player in the league is on a weak team. How can he be MVP if his team wasn't successful, one group will argue. How can he not be, others will say, quoting the stats. If the definition is the wrestler simply with the most impact on the business, than why hasn't Hulk Hogan ever won? If it's for having impact, but also having consistently great matches all year, than why has Hogan ever even been considered? If it's for the wrestler who best represents the positive aspects of the wrestling business, maybe Riger, in 1990, was the perfect choice.

August 19, 1990. Jushin Riger and Pegasus Kid (Chris Benoit) were having their normal match-of-the-year candidate before a full house at the Tokyo Sumo Hall. The finish? After a tombstone pile driver, Kid came off the top rope with a leg drop and got the pin, 1-2-3, clean in the middle. It has been years since a top baby face, who truly is over in every sense of the word, dropped a world title in that decisive a fashion.

Before he was put over by Jushin Riger in August of 1989, Naoki Sano was a great-working prelim wrestler who had one incredible and memorable match a month earlier. After, he was IWGP world junior heavyweight champion and a major wrestling star. Before he was put over by Jushin Riger, Pegasus Kid was just Chris Benoit under a mask. A great-working prelim wrestler in Japan who had one memorable singles match. After, he was

IWGP world junior heavyweight champion and a major star.

Yamada picked his own programs. When the time was right, he put his foe over, clean in the middle and as strongly as possible. Because of the calibre of the matches, the losses did him no harm whatsoever. In hindsight, Jushin Riger has never lost any steam from a loss. He just created himself a worthy opponent. And when Riger eventually regained his title, the opponents returned the favor, as cleanly as possible. On January 31, 1990, after putting Riger over, Naoki Sano was an established major wrestling star. On November 1, 1990, so was Pegasus Kid. And because of the previous matches finish in both cases, to the fans, the outcome was in doubt the entire match, which is why both were match-of-the-year candidates.

And he also had a great match every night. I've had the opportunity to view home video footage of plenty of non-television matches, and there's no difference in his performance whether the cameras are on or off. His trademark move now is the dive over the top rope, flipping in mid-air, and landing by splashing backwards onto his opponent who is standing on the floor. He does the move every night. And don't forget that he also missed two months of the year after his appendix burst, and his title loss to Pegasus Kid came just one week after his return.

"I've seen him on spot shows with only 1,000 fans or so and he does everything that he does at the big shows," said another New Japan regular.

And the once-quiet wrestler, is now a leader for the younger wrestlers. He's always helping coach the younger wrestlers and those in the training school. Yamada now lives in an apartment just one block away from the New Japan dojo. It isn't a rare occurrence, that after a show, or coming back from a tour, that he'll lie in bed at night and think of new moves and spots. He's become known for, at 2 a.m., waking up the rookies, who live in the dojo, and setting up impromptu training sessions so they can all get extra practice, and he can try and do the new moves that he had just visualized.

THE FUTURE

Keiichi Yamada turned 26 this past November 30. He is very much a wrestling mark, as only a mark would go the extra distance for the quality of his matches. He is now tied with Sayama holding the junior heavyweight title three times. What goals are left to accomplish?

Certainly his size limits him against the heavyweights. It appears that in early 1990 he and Koshinaka will form a tag team and challenge for the tag team title. Negro Casas, the best wrestler from Mexico, is being brought in to work with him in the junior heavyweight division. Pegasus Kid is still in the picture. Although politics stand in the way right now, he would like to do a program with Yoshihiro Asai, as the two are good friends. In fact, Benoit's big break as Pegasus Kid came because Riger needed a new foe and Asai, who was originally scheduled to face him at the February Tokyo Dome, had to pull out because he would have lost his job in Mexico had he worked the card. David "Fit" Finlay, a British wrestler who wrestles mainly in Austria and Germany, will be brought in early in 1991 to start a program. Conceivably, there is enough out there for him to have viable and fresh programs all year long.

Yamada has a slim chance of appearing in the United States in 1991. He may be willing to come; but isn't dying to do so, feeling that U.S. wrestling is too showbiz oriented for his tastes. Today's musclebound wrestling business needs something new to shake it up. If spectacular action is the remedy for the business' current ills, no better prescription is on the market. It's often said that U.S. wrestling is five to ten years behind Japan when it comes to trends. 1991 is ten years after 1981, the introduction of Tiger Mask to Japan. Perhaps the man who will spend his entire wrestling career being compared to Tiger Mask will someday be as influential.

"I'd say it would all depend on the booker," said a New Japan wrestler familiar with U.S. style. "He really is a lot smaller than anyone over there, but he does make up for all of it and then some with his ability. It would all be up to the booker and how he's pushed to make it."



Cutie Suzuki



Missy Hyatt

JEFF BOWDREN INTERVIEWS ANGELLE "LUNA" VACHON

Angelle "Luna" Vachon, doubles as both a woman wrestler and a promoter of women's wrestling. Vachon is from a wrestling family. Her father was wrestler Paul "Butcher" Vachon, her uncle was the legendary Maurice "Mad Dog" Vachon, her aunt was a great wrestler and her husband wrestles. In this interview, Vachon talks frankly about her experiences on a recent Japan tour, how she got into wrestling, her experiences in the profession and her thoughts on the state of women in professional wrestling today.

JB: Tell me about your recent trip to Japan? Did you like working in Japan?

Vachon: Oh yeah, I really liked it. They (Japanese women) are the most fabulous athletes in the world. It's incredible to me what the new girls have to go through. Yet, at the same time, it's such an honor to be a woman wrestler in Japan. It's the complete opposite of this country. They really are considered great athletes and are held in high regard.

JB: What are the differences between the All Japan Women promotion, the one with Bull Nakano, and Japan Women Pro Wrestling (JWP), which is the group with Shinobu Kandori, Devil Masami and Cutie Suzuki?

Vachon: I've never worked for the other (All Japan) group before. But I don't think they've ever paid enough to the American girls because for so long Moolah was shipping her girls over there and apparently had some deal with them where they were possibly making even less money than they would make in the United States. When the Lock and I were asked to go to Japan in 1986 (as Lock and Luna, The Daughters of Darkness), it was for JWP. It was for a great deal more money. Lock had been to Japan 13 times before as Wenona Little Heart. There was a big difference in the way we were treated. This is a new company, sort of like Inoki's sister company as the JWP president put it to me. I don't think JWP is quite as stiff and as hardcore as the other company.

JB: Does JWP have a lot of gimmick matches?

Vachon: Not really. The first time I was there, the big stars were Jackie Sato, Nancy Kumi and Shinobu Kandori.

JB: Kandori was Japanese judo champion.

Vachon: Something like that. She's really strong. But it was a delight to work with her. The first time I was there, those three were pretty much the leaders. Now it's changed a lot. Devil Masami and Itsuki Yamazaki (formerly of the Jumping Bomb Angels) are pretty much the bookers, at least as far as who runs the dressing room. Masami is treated with great respect by the girls in the dressing room and by the fans. She could be a real ball buster if she wanted to be, but she's actually a very humble person.

JB: Is she in the position of being like the Moolah of Japan, at least in the sense that she pretty much calls the shots?

Vachon: I'd say higher, because she has everyone's respect. People respect her because she's worked hard all these years. We have respect for Moolah, I mean she can still do back flips over the top rope. But Masami decides who will wrestle who every night. It's pretty wild. She decides

the night of the show who is going to wrestle who except for a big show at Korakuen Hall that has to be promoted well in advance.

JB: Who is the best worker in the JWP?

Vachon: I think Kandori is very, very good. She's really incredible as far as her strength and moves. But the best is still Masami. She has that ability to build the match and bring the crowd with her. Since she's one of the older girls, she doesn't have to hit as hard as the new faces. I mean, when you're in with them, you know it's going to be spud city.

JB: Okay, let's talk about the new girls. A girl in Japan decides she wants to be a pro wrestler. Now I know with the other group they used to have 5,000 girls come out for a try-out and end up picking



Angelle "Luna" Vachon

maybe ten to train. How many girls come out for the JWP?

Vachon: From what I understand, the last tryout had something like 1,200 girls. They kept 50 names on file, and the top ten from that group became new faces.

JB: What is a typical day for a new face?

Vachon: Well, first thing in the morning they load the older girls things onto the bus, pick up the garbage, etc. Basically they are gophers. If we stop somewhere for lunch, because some of these trips are like 17 hours long and one of the older girls wants to stay on the bus, they run and get their lunch. They are basically waitresses. They can't sit down until every one of the other girls is served. When we get to the town, they have to lay a canvas on the arena floor, then set up the ring, unloading it, loading it, getting it into the building, then they put the chairs up and then they start their wrestling workout. That consists of two hours straight of hardcore training, squats with each other on their shoulders, 1,000 sit-ups, I couldn't even tell you how many bridges they do with someone sitting on their stomachs, running, it's just incredible. Then the older girls come in and start whipping on them. But they take their discipline. You never hear a Japanese girl say, "But Luna, that's not the way Wendi Richter does it." They sit and keep their heads down and listen.

JB: It sounds like boot camp?

Vachon: Very much so.

JB: Do they go in there to, like break anyone of a bad attitude? I mean, this may be a bad comparison, but sort of like what Vince McMahon does?

Vachon: I think that's a bad example.

JB: Well, I mean in the sense that he breaks a new wrestlers' spirit and then builds it up again to fit his purposes.

Vachon: That's pretty much what goes on. If they show any disrespect, they'd be out of there. But they all love what they are doing.

JB: Did Kandori have to go through all that being that she was sort of a big shot, you know, judo champion?

Vachon: I'm not sure about her. When I met her in 1986, she was already on top. I'm not sure if they was whizzed right through new face-hood or not. But there was no jealousy or animosity from the other girls.

JB: With all that goes on with the new faces, would you say the JWP dressing room is a happy dressing room? Is there any dissension?

Vachon: Not really. It's amazing to me that after the new faces work out, that they then bring the older girls' gear into the building. They unzip say, Kandori's gear and leave it ready for her. For someone like Devil Masami, when she's ready to get dressed, a Japanese girl will basically dress her and as soon as she's out of the ring, the girls will wipe her off and then they undress her and then repack all of her stuff. All Devil has to do is get in the ring and wrestle. But then the whole process continues for the new faces. Packing, loading, storing, serving. And then we get to the hotel. The new faces have to carry all the gear up the stairs because the elevators are so small. Then they unpack the older girls

stuff, wash out their ring gear, clean out the bus and then they can go to sleep. I should also mention that the new girls wrestle in the first few matches and after that, have to act as security for the rest of the show.

JB: It sounds like they are working a 6 a.m. to midnight shift.

Vachon: Well, longer than that if they are on a long bus ride because they have to have all the clothes washed for the next day.

JB: You were there for three-and-a-half weeks. What was the longest bus ride?

Vachon: From Sapporo to Tokyo I was on the bus with Robin Smith (Rockin Robin) for 28 hours. We were in the middle of a typhoon. Then we had to take an eight-hour ferry ride.

JB: During the typhoon?

Vachon: That didn't bother me. I like being on boats. Also, when the Japanese girls get on the bus, they go right to sleep.

JB: What do you think about someone like Madusa Miceli, who went to Japan full-time for more than a year with the specific intention of improving herself?

Vachon: I think Madusa Miceli is a very brave person. I talked to her when I was there and she seems to be adapting to the culture and enjoying herself. She admitted to me when she first went there that it maybe wasn't for the wrestling, but now she loves that part of it. And for someone who had never even seen a wrestling match before her first match, well, hats off to her. Because, from what I've seen, she's improved her wrestling around 198 percent. God bless her, crazy girl.

JB: Let me ask you about some of the Japanese girls as workers. What about Devil Masami?

Vachon: She throws a lot of power moves in the ring.

JB: Does she get a lot of strength out of those legs of hers?

Vachon: Definitely. You've seen those thighs.

JB: Does the group have the traditional face-heel type of roles?

Vachon: Not really. Things change every night. Robin was switching every night, so was Masami. But the people loved her everywhere. Kandori and Cutie Suzuki are pretty much baby faces. Miss A and Harley Saito go back-and-forth. It was a pleasure working with them because I appreciate a woman that when she throws a kick, you can feel it and it gives you something to work with. None of this pansy lady wrestler stuff who is nothing but a glorified arena rat.

JB: Did they work pretty stiff with you?

Vachon: Not really stiff, just solid. We have people in this country who don't know how to throw a punch. Candi Divine, now I know she's been in a lot of places, but she can't throw a punch. She's like the female equivalent of Blackjack Mulligan, who made a lot of money in this business but couldn't throw a punch and pretty much exposed our business every time he tried. But anyway, it would be hard for me to sell one of Candi's punches. But the girls in Japan throw them in

solid and they are believable to the people. That's the way I was trained, to make it solid.

JB: You say the Japanese women throw such believable punches. Are they so believable that after thrown, you say to yourself, "Oh shit!"

Vachon: No, not at all, because they know where to put them. It might have something to do with my conditioning also. The women who trained me, Judy Martin and Velvet McIntyre, taught me to throw solid punches. Women like that, when they throw a punch, you can hear the smack. So I guess I'm more calloused to the pain than a lot of the newer girls. The Japanese girls know how to put the punches in a comfortable place. Of course, I'm sure if they wanted to put one in your kidneys, it would knock the living hell out of you.

JB: When you were over there, did you have a problem working with any of the Japanese girls? With the men's groups, sometimes matches have a clash in styles.

Vachon: For me it was very uncomfortable at first. For instance, the way that they throw you into the ropes and things like that. But I guess because I'm older than I was on my first tour and I'm not as heavy into my gimmick as I was back in 1986 when I went around Tokyo with my head half-shaved and a chain around my neck. The last time I was there, I never took my sunglasses off in front of the Japanese girls because I thought that I would intimidate them. But it was harder to work this time because I was trying hard to have better matches, so in that sense it was harder in the beginning. The last night of the tour I worked against Robin Smith and we worked American style. Well, my timing was off, her timing was off and it was a big show and we were both nervous. I guess after working with Japanese girls 21 straight nights, well, it was the world's worst match, Abortion No. 3. Anyway, what I'm saying is I did get used to their style.

JB: What about Harley Saito?

Vachon: She's one of the ones I really enjoyed working with. She's super strong and throws awesome round-house kicks. She blows anyone I've ever seen do kicks away.

JB: Based on what you've told me the new faces go through, the girls are all great athletes. But do you think there are any girls who are pushed strictly because they have a pretty face?

Vachon: Cutie Suzuki is a prime example of that. The new president of the company likes the smaller girls, maybe because he's only 5-foot-2 and very thin. He's missing his pinky finger and he knows almost nothing about the wrestling business. He's not even the equivalent of a smart mark. But he likes the smaller, cuter girls and likes to push them.

JB: So they don't like to push the boyish looking girls like All Japan Women do? I mean, that group is kind of strange in that it seems like the promotion purposely goes after girls with "manly" features because supposedly, Chigusa Nagayo's whole appeal was that she looked kind of boyish.

Vachon: I think that group has more bisexuals than JWP. There were a few with JWP, but as far as a lady wrestler thinking, "Oh, if I go to Japan, one of those big dyke Japs is going to tear me apart," it's just not going to

happen. But anyway, I think this company wants to push the cuter girls, but they still need the "butch look" women, too.

JB: Like Harley Saito? Let's be honest, she's got that butch look.

Vachon: She's definitely a butchie-looking woman.

JB: But is that her appeal?

Vachon: That's what I'm saying, it's very possible.

JB: Is that Kandori's appeal as well?

Vachon: I don't think people look at her the same way they look at Saito. They look at her as a human, not as a boy or a girl. I mean, she's butchie, but she's got very feminine ways in the dressing room. Well, I don't know. Maybe she's just one of those girls I haven't seen do anything (laughing).

JB: What about Itsuki Yamazaki, who Americans will remember as half of the Jumping Bomb Angels tag team?

Vachon: Well, she works for our office and the other one (Noriyo Tateno) works for the other group because there was a problem with the other office where Yamazaki didn't get along with the promotion anymore. So she came over to JWP for maybe less money, but she and Devil Masami run the dressing room. But she and her partner are still on good terms. As a matter of fact, they are still roommates. Those two, Miss A and Harley Saito are all roommates. They would all do anything to come to this country because the Bomb Angels loved working in the United States. I stayed up with Harley one night and that's all she talked about — coming to the United States.

JB: But don't they understand the state of women's wrestling in this country? The fact that there isn't much of it, and that a lot of what there is, is just a T and A show.

Vachon: They really don't understand that. All they know about the U.S. are the names NWA and WWF or they'll see a photo of Sting in a magazine and think the United States is the ultimate, where in our minds, Japan is the ultimate.

JB: Let's talk about your start in the business. Obviously your father and uncle were both wrestlers. Is this something you always wanted to do?

Vachon: When I was three years old I decided I wanted to be a wrestler. My father and uncle both tried to discourage me even though my Aunt Vivian was a great wrestler. As a matter of fact, she wrestled more like a man than a woman. A lot of the women who wrestled back then like Aunt Vivian, Kay Noble and Jean Antone worked a lot more solid than the women today.

JB: I've never seen any of them on video, but the names I remember when I was growing up were Betty Niccoli, Sandy Parker and Penny Banner. I think she was married to Johnny Weaver. And there was Donna Christianello, Toni Rose and Susan Greene.

Vachon: Those were all Moolah's girls.

JB: Well, Moolah basically ran the show back then.

Vachon: Definitely. The women back then worked a lot more solid than the women today. And they were bigger

women. But my father and uncle tried to discourage me because even my Aunt Vivian, who was a super worker, never got the respect due her because women's matches were always perceived as, you know, the kind of thing you run at a county fair.

JB: Sort of like the midgets?

Vachon: Exactly. They were like the freaks. And we haven't been treated with any respect. A lot of women in our business were lesbians and whores and unfortunately the road is lonely so what was good for a man would get a girl a bad reputation. So my family didn't want me to go into the sport. As a matter of fact, they turned against me because I wanted to do it so bad. It wasn't for a long time, but just the same, they did do it. You know, "Don't come home for Christmas if your head is half-shaven."

JB: The first time I remember seeing you was on Florida television in the skit with Kevin Sullivan. You were this semi-bogus Pro Wrestling Illustrated photographer who was there to present Kendall Windham with the Wrestler of the Month award. And you fell under Kevin's demonic spell. Now was that your first action or had you been in another area wrestling?

Vachon: I had 11 matches before that skit. Wahoo McDaniel had seen me. Lady Maxine was in there at the time and Wahoo mentioned that I had helped train her. So they needed someone to come in and take a bump. Well, when I showed up at 110 pounds, they were like, "Oh, no, Kevin is going to hurt her doing that angle." They were telling me not to take the bump during the angle. But Kevin was so impressed because I was a Vachon and said, "Do you think you could take a bump in that white skirt?" I told him, sure, so I took the bump and the place went nuts. He slapped the hell out of me. From what I understand, there had been some problems with Maxine not selling his stuff, so he had learned to really hand it off to a woman. I mean, have you seen what he does to job boys? So he really handed it off to me. It was a good solid hit. After I got back to the dressing room, and everyone had been warning me beforehand what I was in for, I said, "Is that the best you can do?" Well, Wahoo and Mike Graham just loved that. It was like, "What can we do for you." So I said, do something with me. I don't care. How about a hair match? Well, Kevin overheard that and asked me if I would shave half my head. It was like, no problem. They checked with the office which was run at the time by Hiro Matsuda and Duke Tanaka, and Wahoo was the booker.

JB: So you are the one who brought up shaving your head?

Vachon: Yeah. I really just wanted them to do something with my character.

JB: So it wasn't a case of them saying, "We'll give you a job if you shave half of your head."

Vachon: No. Peggy Lee Leather was around the area as Peggy Lee Pringle. Percy had just left the area and Peggy had just gotten hurt. So I came into a program with Maxine. Here she was, about a foot taller than me and maybe 100 pounds heavier. And she's the baby face. I'm just this little girl and all of a sudden I've gotta be this possessed creature by Kevin Sullivan. So in the beginning, I was doing things like flying head-scissors.

Lord, I didn't know any better. I mean, Moolah always told me, "You'll never heel. You'll always be a baby." But we were able to make this feud believable. Smart marks in the crowd used to tell Kevin Sullivan that they thought I really could kick her ass. I personally thought I could have too, but that really doesn't matter (laughs).

JB: What about the head shaving?

Vachon: The funny thing is after I did that, Bob Roop was talking about having us get plastic surgery on half of our face. He said that we'd make every newspaper in the country. I even considered it because I was thinking, hey, this is Bob Roop. I mean, he was on the Olympic team. That gave him sort of a mystique to me. He was totally into that gimmick at one time also.

JB: What happened after the program with Maxine?

Vachon: I stayed here for 15 months, working with Sullivan, Roop and Mark Lewin.

JB: You had a stint in Memphis, too.

Vachon: Yeah, I was there for a short time in the winter of 1987. There wasn't much money around for the guys. But the girls and I had a \$100 a night guarantee. They would pay us off in advance in the dressing room in front of the guys.

JB: You had the guarantee, not the guys?

Vachon: Right. Me and Lock. So they were paying us in front of the boys. Little did I know that the boys couldn't get advances, but I had made that deal before I came in based on advice Dick Slater gave me. Mike Davis had told me that there was some heat from the boys because we were getting paid and they hadn't been paid in a couple of weeks. And Mike has these little kids running around the hotel and he was doing everything he could do just to keep food on their table. When I heard that, here these guys were just trying to keep this territory alive and they weren't making the kind of money I was.

JB: They take some long road trips in Memphis, don't they?

Vachon: Really. The night I found most of this out, we were in Evansville, Indiana.

JB: Now famous as the site of Chris Champion's arrest. You've heard about that?

Vachon: Wow, have I!

JB: Getting back to "Mempho" and the road trips.

Vachon: Yeah, Slater was working in New York at the time and it just wasn't worth it. The Lock was being a total pain in my behind and was sort of relying on me a little too much. She was being pretty much a baby about the road trips.

JB: So how did Luna and Lock get together?

Vachon: She showed up on my doorstep one day. I had known her as Wenona Little Heart. His father was Dirty Dick Barkley who was the booker in Atlanta for years.

JB: So let's kill a rumor, she's not Barry Windham's sister, right?

Vachon: No, No, puh-lease.

JB: So you left Memphis because you thought the boys were getting ripped off.

Vachon: Exactly. Moolah once told me that my heart was much too big for this business and I'd end up getting it ripped apart. But when Luna came along, it gave me a person to hide behind who had some strength.

JB: So what happened when you left Memphis?

Vachon: I sort of hung out. Slater was still working in New York. He was getting heat from the office because I was this half-bald lunatic running around and Dick and I would show up at Nasty Ronnie's concerts and have these photos taken, which were only supposed to show up in the Japanese magazines by the way, show up in the magazines in this country. Here was Slater, working as a baby face in New York being seen at a concert with this heel from Florida.

JB: Is that when Slater left New York?

Vachon: No. He asked me to come home from Memphis because he had worked 42 straight days and wanted me home on his day off. I told him what was going on there and he knows how I feel about this business and the guys who try so hard to keep areas alive. So he told me, "Hell, I'll pay you \$100 a day just to stay home." It was so hard on the guys in Memphis because Jerry Lawler was in the hospital at the time. I never actually met him, which should tell you how long I was there. So at this point I grew my hair back and was ready to quit the business.

JB: You had only been in it for two years then?

Vachon: Well, my first shot was Christmas night of 1984 in the Dakotas with Buzz Sawyer. That was my first road trip and my last work until Florida in 1985. Moolah kind of keeps you in a position where you are hungry. She likes to keep you in a position where you need her. Well, at the time, wrestling was more like a second job to me. I really didn't need it. But on the Dakotas tour she told me, "Hon, you're gonna make \$75 a night." Now she sent me even though I'd only been at her school for six weeks and there were more experienced girls there. So I went to the Dakotas and after I talked with Brett Sawyer, he asked his brother, "Why is she only making \$75 a night when she has to pay Moolah 25 percent?" and Buzz says, "Hell, she ain't making \$75 a night, she's making \$150 a night!" So Moolah was making a fool out of me even though all my life, wherever we were, she stayed in our home, she was treated to tours of the city and here she was keeping \$75 a day for herself plus making her 25 percent booking fee. That gave me a bad taste in my mouth for the business right from the beginning. I didn't mean to get off the track, but I wanted to get the story off my chest about what a douche bag she is. Yet, at the same time I respect her for being able to do a back flip into the corner at her age. She has this story about how when she was 14, which must have been about 120 years ago, how she ordered a bowl of hot water and poured ketchup into it and had ketchup soup for her meal so you have to admire someone who has paid her dues that much. Wendy (Lock) and I got together when I was living with Oliver Humperdink, who was a friend from way back, and Wendy wanted to get back into the business, but not as a baby face Indian because she hated the character. So she came with us to the Bayfront Arena (St. Petersburg) one night and both of us had half our heads shaved

and wore these real bitchin' outfits. Bob Roop was the booker then and we were to walk out with The Nightmares. Roop turned to them and said that they are going to have to set themselves on fire to get anyone to pay attention to their match because everyone is going to be watching those bimbos. The Nightmares were working with The Fabs. Lock was going crazy working the crowd and I was thinking she was gonna get killed. It was wild.

JB: Let's set the record straight. Were you ever married to Dick Slater?

Vachon: We were never actually married. We exchanged vows on our boat and we sort of considered ourselves married but as this business does to a lot of people, it tore us apart.

JB: What U.S. women do you respect the most as workers?

Vachon: Without a doubt, Leilani Kai. She's so strong. Have you ever seen her hands? She's got awesome hands. When you close your eyes and she hits you, you would never know she'd touched you. I only wrestled her at Camp Moolah, but when she's coming at you, you want to close your eyes because she looks like one pissed-off squaw. She works real light but she doesn't show that. She's one of the few Americans who is that good.

JB: Who else is good?

Vachon: Wendi Richter, definitely. When Wendi first started, she'd tell us that one day she'd take the strap from Lillian (Moolah). Being from the rodeo circuit, she was heavy when she first started but she worked and trained real hard for the spot she got. I also think Peggy Lee Leather is awesome. She hasn't been given a chance because of her size, but she's an excellent worker.

JB: What do you think of Misty Blue? Is she a glorified T and A girl?

Vachon: She does a lot of good spots, but I don't know if she understands the psychology of the ring. From what I know about Misty Blue, it's all pretty much done like a script. It's spot one, spot two, spot three, spot four and they pretty much stick to that.

JB: Are the girls she works with sort of like "Misty's girls?"

Vachon: Exactly. When I've tried to contact her to have her and her girls work with our group, the feeling is we were turned down because Misty wouldn't be in a "control" situation. It doesn't matter to me if what Misty Blue does is T and A or not. It may not be what I'd like on one of my shows, but it takes a little bit of everything. I mean, I had my head half-shaved! I'm sure that women wrestlers are viewed as sexual fantasies by a lot of guys even if that's not what we're trying to do, just like there are girls who have fantasies about the male wrestlers. I'm not trying to promote a T and A show, but there are always going to be people who view women's wrestling as that.

JB: One other name I want to bring up is Sherri Martel.

Vachon: Wow!! Sherri Martel. Lucky. She's obviously getting a big push from the WWF. She was in Japan in 1986 when I was there with Lock and she is one incredible worker. I don't think she gets to shine as much as

she would like to because she loves to be in the ring and she's very comfortable in the ring.

JB: She's got a great ring presence, also. A lot of the time she steals the show.

Vachon: I can appreciate that in a woman.

JB: Tell us about the company you are with right now.

Vachon: It's called Ladies Major League Wrestling. I hope we'll be a success, as much for the girls in the promotion as for anything. Hats off to Tor Berg and the LPWA as well because at least they are giving women a place to work in this country.

JB: When you look at something like GLOW, do you think that's just a T and A show or do you think, "Well, at least they are giving some girls work?"

Vachon: I think it's a T and A show and it makes a joke out of my profession. But years ago, I tried out for GLOW in Miami. At the time they were the only people doing anything with women wrestling and I thought that if I got my nose in there I could change their direction.

JB: What's the difference between the way your group promotes wrestling and the LPWA?

Vachon: I don't think the LPWA gave some of the veterans like Leilani Kai and Judy Martin the spot they deserve. These girls can work and they've paid their dues. I've heard horror stories about who they've had Leilani Kai do jobs for. I would never put her in that position. I mean, if it were part of an angle or something, that would be different. I just don't see putting somebody of her stature and ability into a position like that for no reason and having some girl who has been in the business for 18 months putting her shoulders to the mat. There's something dead wrong with that. There is a place in this country for women's wrestling. But we need to educate the public to it.

JB: What do you think of valets?

Vachon: When I first started, the Lock and I were basically manager-valets. And I saw some pretty talented workers outside the ring. Now in some of these smaller promotions, you see these extremely curvy women who are at ringside but have no idea what's going on in the ring. I wanted to be different. You aren't there to take anything away from what's happening in the ring, yet at the same time, if the match is going bad or if I can hear the spots being called at ringside, I'm going to work even harder.

JB: In other words, the better the match, the less you have to work and the worse the match, the harder you'll work.

Vachon: Exactly.

JB: But the problem right now is that instead of a Jim Cornette or a Bobby Heenan or a Paul Dangerously that can work a crowd at ringside, you now get women like Missy Hyatt, Tessa and the Dirty White Girl who are just standing there as a T and A show and distract people from the match.

Vachon: Exactly. But at one point in wrestling, that's all every girl in wrestling was doing.

JB: By the same token, there is room for someone who is both, because Precious was both attractive and great at ringside.

Vachon: Exactly. My gimmick wasn't like hers. But I wanted to know what was going on in the ring so I could be an asset to the match.

JB: I'm just saying that in a better wrestling world than the one we live in, it would be nice if those girls who were there for the T and A aspects could also work ringside as good as Precious.

Vachon: My thing was to not be like anyone else. And Kevin Sullivan pretty much gave me free reign to do anything I wanted. I also wanted to be strong on interviews. That was important when your uncle is Mad Dog Vachon.



Blue Panther vs. El Texano



Eddie Guerrero

A TRIP TO JAPAN

By Kurt Brown

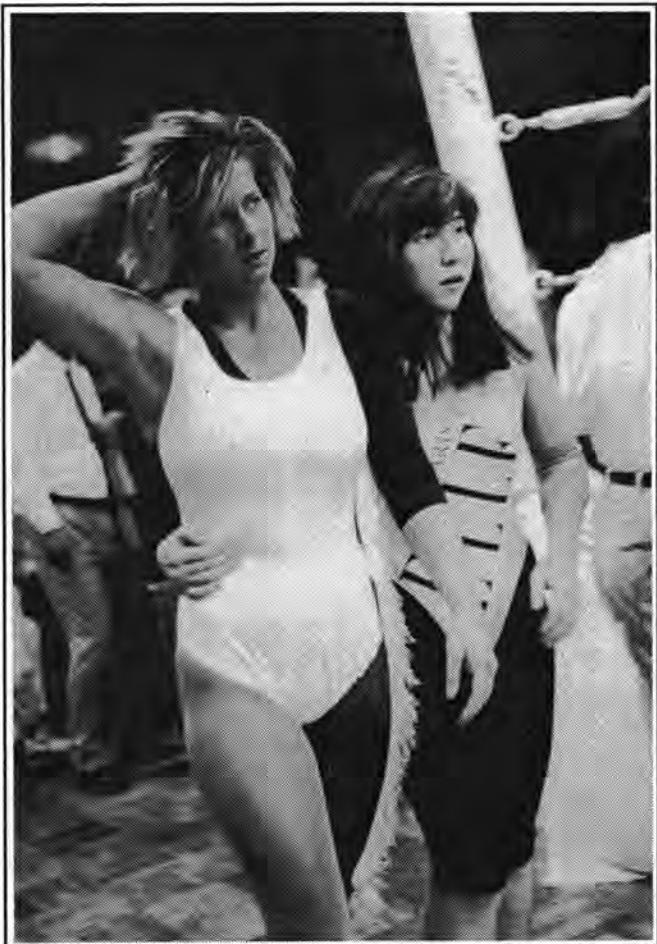
As I woke up early in our hotel room the first morning I was in Japan, instinctively, I reached for the television remote control. I came across talk shows and documentaries, but the tongue was totally foreign to me. I kept clicking the channels until I landed a lively cartoon about a group of children and these two talking dogs which they owned. From what I could gather, the premise is that this arrogant little boy is the owner of one of the dogs and is boasting to the other children that his talking dog is much more intelligent than the other dog. The other children put their dog forward to challenge the boy's mutt in an IQ test. Well, the little boy's dog plays the fall guy, answering the first question incorrectly with a typical cartoon-like "dunce" tone of voice. The other kids laughed and the humiliated boy bawled out his pup in Japanese. None of his boisterous cries are at all familiar to me until I hear him scream, "SUPLEX!" The boy went behind his dog, and then gave the dim canine a German suplex. The dog answered another question wrong and is suplexed again. But the dog came back and gave his owner a taste of his own medicine. He suplexed the boy and then continued his vengeance by wrapping the brat up in Antonio Inoki's Octopus hold (mangigatamae). Here is a cartoon, having nothing to do with wrestling, yet it contains more wrestling moves than an entire hour of "WWF Superstars of Wrestling." My groggy mind woke up and I was psyched. I was in the right country to watch pro wrestling.

The presence of pro wrestling in Japan differs greatly from the United States. The above-mentioned cartoon is not an isolated example of wrestling being present outside of a "wrestling atmosphere." As Dave and I roamed the streets and subways of Tokyo, we saw professional wrestling in all different forms of press on the newsstands and we overheard the names of wrestlers in conversations going on around us. Upon leaving the streets and hitting the wrestling arenas, I saw the different attitudes of Japanese fans as compared to those I've grown up around in the United States. Like the U.S., Japan has a large number of wrestling fans. What differs is the magnified presence and fanatical interest of the Japanese fans.

When Dave and I went to Japan this past June, we had the following wrestling promotions to check out: All Japan, Gran Hamada's Universal, Japan Women Pro and Atsushi Onita's FMW. During our stay, there were no New Japan, UWF or All Japan Women shows. Now those three promotions not running that week would, on paper, make this seem like a lackluster trip. Not the case. True, it would have been great to see Jushin Riger fly, as it would be to see Akira Maeda land some kicks or to witness the sensuous sadism of Bull Nakano. Still, we saw a thorough synopsis of Japanese wrestling. The foundation of the sport, Shohei Baba's promotion, was running and in addition we had the chance to see emerging trend-setting promotions.

Our first day in Japan had no wrestling cards. Some friends showed us around Tokyo. We wound up in a trendy shopping district which they called "Gimmick Street." There were numerous stores which sold items dealing with one subject. There were Beatles stores, an Elvis store, an Ultraman store, a Mr. Croket store (he's a famous entertainer in Japan, not to be confused with wrestling's Mr. Crockett) and much more. I was happily spending my yen on Astro Boy, Godzilla and Ultraman souvenirs when we ran across a store called "Pink Ton Ton." This shop is a small clothing and souvenir boutique owned by Dump Matsumoto and Yukari Omori. Although Dump has retired as a wrestler, she is still a major celebrity. There are posters of Dump and Yukari. Dump was minus her bad-girl make-up, holding mascot piglets and beaming friendly smiles that she never showed in the ring. Down the street we saw a store which said it was the All Japan Women souvenir shop, but it had recently been sold.

We finished off our journey through Gimmick Street with a stop at the bookstore to check out the wrestling magazines. As in Mexico, most wrestling publications are published on a weekly basis. If you are an avid wrestling fan in Japan, these publications are a necessity. In the United States, there is a limited amount of wrestling action happening in any concentrated area. However, with so many promotions running on a consistent basis in a country as geographically small as Japan (roughly the size of California), one needs a weekly



Madusa and Kaoru Maeda

source of news and upcoming shows. In addition, several daily sports-oriented newspapers (similar to "The National") feature wrestling results on a daily basis, complete with the finishing times of the falls and finishing moves. The most important matches have photo coverage in the daily paper. Looking around I gazed through a few non-wrestling publications and am surprised to see Genichiro Tenryu's photo jumping out at me everywhere. Our arrival in Japan was shortly after Tenryu announced his resignation from All Japan and jump to SWS. The echoes of this major story are visible from wrestling and sports magazines all the way to a major interview in that month's Playboy Magazine.

We checked out our first wrestling card on June 1 from the Universal group. This promotion brought Mexico's finest wrestlers to Japan. Seeing the fans' interest and reactions to a style of wrestling different than what they are used to was an experience in itself. The Lucha Libre shows were held in Korakuen Hall. It's a great place to watch wrestling, seating about 2,000 and it is located on the fifth floor of a building in the Korakuen Mall, which includes an amusement park and the Tokyo Egg Dome. Before the matches started, Dave and I were munching out at a restaurant in the mall. In the middle of a meal, we impolitely eavesdropped and we overheard some Spanish being spoken at the table next to us. The local fans were going through a Japanese/Spanish translation book, preparing themselves to meet the Mexican wrestlers. We realized the Universal group had already gained a cult following.

The traffic was heavy at the souvenir stands inside the lobby. Items ranged from posters advertising the tour, t-shirts, masks and programs. The items moved fast. This was even more the case at the FMW card, as "Onitamania" truly was running wild and you have to secure a place in line early as the FMW souvenirs disappeared quickly. The crowd dispersed as the opening match is ready to start.

The opener featured two matches with Japanese rookies, followed by an All Japan Women match. The matches with the rookies told us a lot about the sort of action the fans here expect to see. The first match consisted of two young guns named Coolie Shoji and Masa Michinoku. I watched this match and was impressed with how hard the guys were working. Granted, they were a bit green, but they worked solid and have a lot of enthusiasm. The crowd, on the other hand, was not as empathizing. While the wrestlers received polite applause when they delivered loud chops across the chest, they are also mercilessly heckled at the slightest missed spot. I considered the opener to be better than most openers in

the United States, but in a country where you see Jushin Riger, maybe this wasn't a good match.

Throughout the Lucha Libre matches, the fans quickly became thrilled to the style. The complex spots got over huge. The fans were surprisingly familiar with wrestlers such as El Hijo Del Santo, who had never appeared in Japan previously. About the only thing that got a lukewarm reaction were the falls in which the rudos (heels) dominated and did little more than beat on the tecnicos. But that doesn't always get over in Mexico, either. The luchadores seemed attentive to the fans likes and dislikes and adapted their style, so by the final night, they put on an excellent card from start-to-finish. At one point during this card, a fan mistook Dave for Pegasus Kid. Dave was flattered.

No trip to Japan would be complete, nor would a suitcase be truly stuffed without a trip to "Wrestle," one of the wrestling stores in Tokyo. It's about the size of a small bedroom, yet succeeds in fitting in scores of wrestling shirts, videos and other souvenirs.

If five people were to browse around at one time, it would already be too crowded. At this point, Akira Maeda's UWF seemed to have the most fanatical following as the majority of the shop's merchandise was geared toward that promotion. Items you can pick up were unique and endless: Riki Choshu coffee mugs and pencil holders, Lou Thesz videotapes, New Japan key chains, back issues of numerous wrestling magazines, photo-books on the major stars, calendars, videotapes of virtually every major card, Crush Girl bandannas, Antonio Inoki tapes (dating back to his 1969 match with Dory Funk Jr.), Super Strong Machine masks and my personal favorite item, the plastic model Dump Matsumoto kit. About the only items

not in the shop are those of the All Japan promotion, as Baba doesn't allow his souvenirs sold here. I left the shop lugging two heavy bags of wrestling paraphernalia, wondering just how I'll be able to fit it in my suitcase and how long it will take me to pay off this trip (not the trip to Japan, just the trip to "Wrestle.")

The FMW is something completely different. Like Universal, it caters to a specific type of wrestling, namely 1970's Tennessee style. Onita presents a violent display of wrestling with a variety of gimmicks intertwined: chain matches, barbed wire matches, martial arts vs. wrestling, midgets and his most famous, the street fight. Onita has gained an extremely loyal following as we found out.

After winning his main event match, Onita was on the wireless mic sobbing an interview (he cries about as often as Tammy Faye). A few fans in the balcony were



Super Astro and Negro Navarro

heckling him. It started early in the card when they screamed about a wrestler (Masanobu Kurisu) who was a no-show (he had been fired a week earlier for hitting a fan during an outside the ring brawl). By the main event, the fans had a running battle with fans on the lower level. While everyone in the building got into the cry "Fake boxer" at Kevin Kelly during what was billed as a boxer vs. wrestler match with Dick Murdoch, or chants of "Blade, blade" when Sambo Asako pulled it out, but when the hecklers started saying that Onita was washed-up, the other fans came to his defense. After the match Onita glared bitterly at the fans in the upper deck and screamed back something to the equivalent of, "We are not wrestling's finest, but even garbage has its pride!" He then hurled the wireless mic at the balcony. The rest of Korakuen Hall followed suit.

Fans began throwing everything from cokes to chairs to programs at the balcony. I spotted one teenager screaming something while he headed for the balcony to start a fight. A heavy-duty janitor's broom was heaved toward the upper deck. Meanwhile, Onita is in the elevated ringside section, mobbed by fans as if he were Bruce Springsteen. While Onita's fans aren't as numerous as those of some of the bigger-name wrestlers, their dedication to him is astounding.

After the matches one evening, we went to a great little restaurant, "Ribera Steak House," which is another essential tourist stop. Mr. Ribera's restaurant is tiny, with seating at a counter only. Maybe eight-to-ten people could fit into this place securely. The steaks are fantastic and the price is surprisingly reasonable. But the highlight is the gallery of wrestling photographs, most of which have been snapped by Mr. Ribera when the wrestlers were eating dinner there. In addition to framed 8x10's, there are stacks upon stacks of photos of touring wrestlers. He changed what framed photos are on display every night. One night you'll see Ric Flair and the Road Warriors above the counter, the next night it'll be Owen Hart and Big Van Vader. All photos are personally autographed, some with interesting messages. Harley Race's photo autograph has, under his name, "seven-times REAL world champion," written at a time when there was bad blood between Race and Hulk Hogan, then the WWF champion. Next to Race's photo is one of Nick Bockwinkel, where Bockwinkel cleverly wrote under his name, "three times semi-real world champion." The top one was the framed photo of The Freebirds (Michael Hayes and Terry Gordy) with them holding up a sign reading, "To Mr. Ribera, from the only two guys who told Ole to f - off and never came back and kissed his ass." At

one point this evening, Dave is again mistaken for the Pegasus Kid and he is once again flattered.

Our last full day in Japan was the day of a card billed as "All Japan Mania," held at the 15,000-seat Budokan Hall in Tokyo, Japan's version of Madison Square Garden. Before the card, as we were shopping, Dave and I inadvertently gave ourselves a lesson in empathy. Dave, out of nowhere, started laughing. I looked around for the punch line when Dave exclaimed, "Kurt I just realized we look like the biggest tourists around." He pointed at the shirts we were wearing. I had on a "Tokyo Dome" t-shirt. Dave was wearing his new "Hard Rock Cafe Tokyo" t-shirt. It was the only clean shirts we had left. So if you are one of those who gets annoyed by tourists in your home town who look like tourists, think twice. You can come across the same way very unintentionally.

The final match we saw in Japan will go down as a monumental match in Japanese wrestling history, Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Mitsuhiro Misawa. Misawa had just a few weeks earlier given up his Tiger Mask persona. This match personified the thrill of seeing wrestling live as much as any match can possibly do. Tenryu had just jumped, leaving All Japan without its biggest drawing card. It was the most important match of Misawa's career. Tenryu's departure is either Misawa's fortune or his flop. Tsuruta just lost his triple crown to Terry Gordy three nights earlier, and everyone in the building doubts that Jumbo will do two straight clean jobs. Although Misawa has been wrestling for many years, this was the classic established top star vs. the young gun with his chance to become a superstar. Everyone in the building was jittery over the match.

Let me pounce a few weeks into the future for a moment to give a perspective on this. After Dave and I returned from Japan, we talked with friends who saw this match on videotape. It was generally considered a great match, but not a match of the year. I learned from this that as much as I've enjoyed Japanese wrestling videotapes in the past, the experience of seeing a match like this live is a totally different perspective. When you watch a match like this on tape, you can't feel the tension that is



Choshu and Tatsumi Fujinami

in the building when wrestling is treated as sport, the match has major importance and nobody knows who is going to win, but they do know that somebody is going to win.

Every near fall popped the place like crazy. With Misawa as the underdog, the one the crowd wanted to win, hoped would win, but in their "smart minds," deep down knew would eventually lose, the crowd would count, "one, two..." in unison every time Misawa had Jumbo covered. The fans sighed, and then politely applauded when Jumbo kicked out. When Tsuruta had Misawa pinned, the tension peaked when the ref counted "two," followed by a breathtaking sigh and loud stomping of the feet when Misawa kicked out.

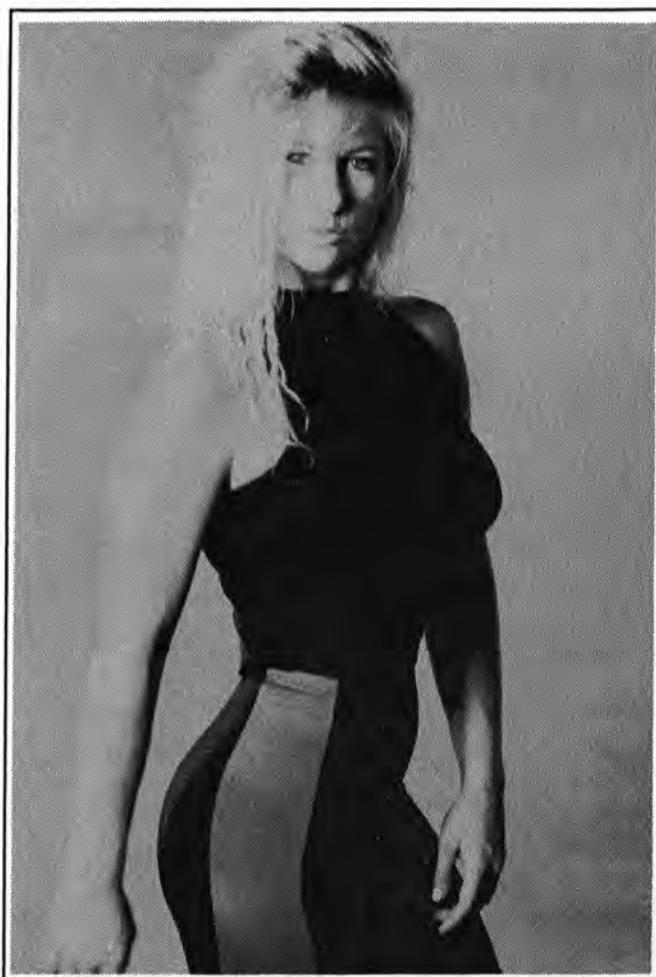
After 24 minutes, with all 15,000 fans completely spent emotionally and both wrestlers spent physically, the match climaxed perfectly. Misawa reversed a pin attempt by Tsuruta and got the three count. This match, and the scene that followed, was worth a trip to Japan all by itself.

The crowd was ecstatic over the win. Misawa's trip back to the dressing room was wilder than any post-match

victory reaction that I've ever seen. Fans weren't simply reaching out to give him high-fives. Scores of fans raced over to Misawa until he was swarmed. Fans were reaching over each other in hopes of patting him on the back. The enthusiasm was such that these pats on the back resembled a Ric Flair or a Tenryu chop. The emotion was such that many fans were crying. The release of all the tension built up during the match was absolutely incredible. Nobody knew exactly how this work of art called a wrestling match would end. When it climaxed, the celebration was unrestrained.

We left Budokan Hall and headed toward the subway along with buddies Han-Bay, Koichi and Masayuki. While waiting for a train, a fan approached Dave, mistaking him for Mark Scarpa. Dave looked concerned. We patted him on the back and assured him that they looks more like Pegasus Kid.

We headed back to the United States the next day. I was anxious to return home and see my wife, but I wished there was some way I could take this pro wrestling back home with me.



Madusa



Scott Steiner

A TALE OF TWO YEARS

By Chris Zavisa

When Charles Dickens opened his epic novel "A Tale of Two Cities," he gave us the memorable line, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." Dickens was describing the era of the French Revolution with all its attendant excitement and bloodshed. But the state of the NWA over the past two years largely fits Dickens' description. 1989 was one of the best years for the NWA. 1990, to put it bluntly, was the pits.

Sure, there were plenty of low points in 1989. George Scott's booking of the NWA and Jim Cornette and the Midnight Express leaving, the unforgettable Ding Dongs and others. And 1990 had high points, like a weekend of Scott Steiner running the gauntlet on TBS, but I don't think you could assemble a two hour "best of" videotape for the year.

Here are the people, events and trends that took us from the penthouse to the outhouse.

gone from the ring, shabbily discarded like out of fashion clothing. Their spots were taken by far less talented performers.

MIDDLE OF THE CARD

For a promotion to be strong, it is not enough to have good main-event stars. You also need many middle-of-the-card people who can keep things moving. In 1989, these included Sting, Muta, The Steiner brothers, Luger, Brian Pillman and the Midnight Express. On occasion, many were moved up for short programs in the main events. Compare that to 1990 with a line-up of Junkyard Dog, Sid Vicious, Tommy Rich, Tom Zenk and Dutch Mantell. And that is not even including the never-ending list of green monsters introduced by Jim Herd at the recent Clashes.

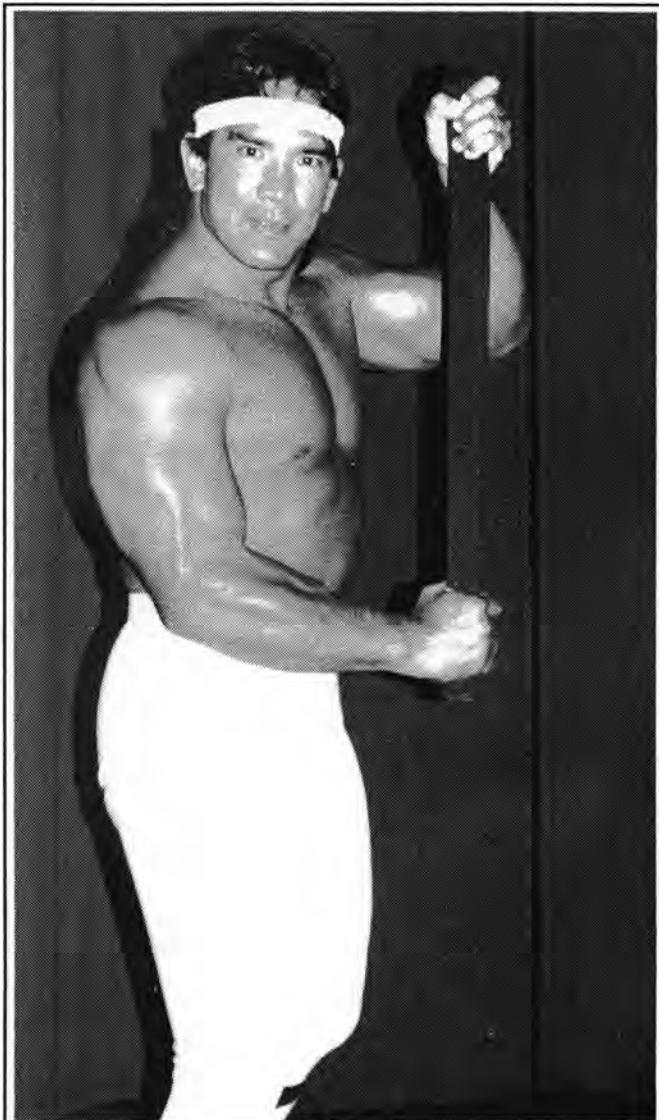
RIC FLAIR

The greatest wrestler, at least since Lou Thesz, had his greatest year in 1989. In fact, 1989 being a banner year was mainly due to the Nature Boy. Much of everything that would happen, by necessity, revolved around him. Flair had a great number of matches against very talented foes. For much of the year he wrestled two other all-time great wrestlers, Ricky Steamboat and Terry Funk. They produced four-to-five star matches nightly. Flair's matches against other opponents like Lex Luger, Bobby Eaton and the Great Muta were also a treat to watch. Compare that to 1990, when Flair was knocked off his No. 1 perch and it is still not clear how far the promotion wants him to eventually fall. Flair spent much of 1990 wrestling Junkyard Dog and Sting, and wound up the year in a tag team feud. In 1989, Flair was a major power on the booking committee. In 1990, he nearly left the promotion for McMahon land. Even the classic Flair interviews, three or four minutes of intensity, were reduced to 30 seconds of warmed-over cliches.

In balloting for 1989's match of the year, Ric Flair was in the top four matches. In 1990, there may not be one Ric Flair match in the top ten.

RICKY STEAMBOAT AND TERRY FUNK

In 1989, Steamboat and Funk were two very opposite sides of the same coin. They both provided exceptional opposition to Ric Flair, and proved they were still right at the top in the business. When Steamboat finished his run with Flair, Funk picked it up and didn't miss a beat. Although their primary focus was with Flair, they each had excellent matches with others. Despite all that both gave to the promotion, by the end of 1989, both were



Ricky Steamboat

JIM HERD

In 1989, Jim Herd was just beginning to feel his way around. He occasionally came up with ideas, like the Hunchbacks (which were never used) and the Ding Dongs (which were), but he stayed away from the actual booking. By 1990, Herd had dramatically increased his influence. He went far more to Titan Sports' character development and gimmick approach at the expense of a good product. He devalued his best talent in Ric Flair, and reduced good workers like the Midnight Express and Pillman to opening acts. He built the promotion around a wrestler with a bad knee, made his top heel a 6-foot-8 steroid freak who can't, and won't work even the simplest of matches. On a TV news show we found out Herd's test for measuring a great wrestler he is able to step over the top rope. Thus, we take a basketball player who couldn't even play basketball and turn him into a wrestler who couldn't wrestle.

Herd hired a booker who thought the nation had been in a ten-year time warp, cheapened his quarterly specials and split his house show crews into two watered-down units. Jim Cornette, maybe the single most talented individual in the wrestling business, finally walked out. But the majority of the fans had walked out and given up much earlier.

THE BOOKING COMMITTEE

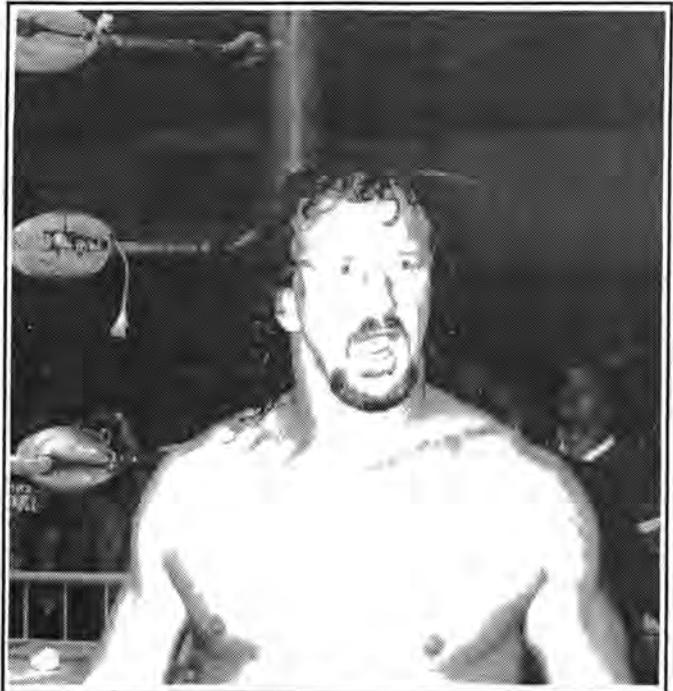
The concept of a booking committee was one almost nobody liked, but one thing can't be challenged. It produced great wrestling, interesting angles and kept things interesting. For most of 1990, wrestling was created through the eyes of Ole Anderson. In 1989, the thoughts of Flair, Jim Ross, Kevin Sullivan, Cornette, Funk and Eddie Gilbert kept the NWA fresh. Ole's booking combined with Herd's direction couldn't hold a candle to 1989.

AS FOR THE WWF

While Titan Sports was no great shakes in 1989, there were some bright spots. The best wrestling was provided by The Rockers battling Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson. Their series produced several great matches.

Randy Savage held the WWF title for the first three months and he was a great champion. His best moments came in a continuing great series of pre-Wrestlemania interviews. But in 1990, Savage was converted into the king of op-art spandex and cast as the perennial loser to Dusty Rhodes, and playing second fiddle to a vampire-like screaming banshee.

The final indignity to the Rockers came when they defeated the Hart Foundation for the tag team titles, but Vince took them away, never airing the match.



Terry Funk

As the year progressed, fewer and fewer people drawing a Titan paycheck wrestled under an actual name. They became outlandish comic book characters. One of their few genuine talents, Jesse Ventura, said good bye, leaving us with the ever-shrill voice of Vince McMahon.

Vince's solution to a summer of poor house shows and dramatically faltering attendance was to bring in Sgt. Slaughter, Tony Atlas and turn Nikolai Volkoff baby face.

REGIONAL PROMOTIONS

For the past five years, everyone has predicted the inevitable death of the regional circuits. Once the backbone of wrestling, the small circuits have gone the way of high-button shoes and TV preachers.

AND FINALLY, HOPE

The poets tell us that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." And that may be the biggest difference of all between 1989 and 1990.

1989 was a very emotionally uplifting year. When 1989 started, Ted Turner made big-time battle sounds leading us to think a major wrestling war was finally going to take place. We had hope. Hope that good wrestling would be properly promoted. But in 1990, our hopes were dashed. We discovered that Ted Turner would never be anything but a very distant No. 2 to Vince McMahon. Titan may have lost some steam in 1990, but the NWA ran out of gas. The good wrestling of 1989 proved to be the fad with the quick fade.

WRESTLING LIFE ON THE FRINGE WITH CACTUS JACK

By Mark Madden

If for nothing else, Cactus Jack will be remembered for his hip-shattering elbow drop off the ring apron and for the host of incredible bumps he's taken.

He wants to be remembered for so much more. He realizes that if things don't happen soon, he won't be remembered at all.

Cactus Jack, nee Mick Foley, has the dubious distinction of being one of the best professional wrestlers not working for a major promotion. His brief NWA stint (November 1989 through June 1990) notwithstanding, Foley's Cactus Jack persona has yet to really see the light of day, to become accepted and respected by anyone but newsletter readers and other wrestlers.

He isn't even sure all those people give him the type of acceptance and respect he wants.

"For me to succeed, I have to erase the notion that I'm a 'funny performer,'" said Cactus, 26, in a recent interview. "I do my dramatic stuff, like the elbow off the apron, but sometimes I feel like people leave saying 'Boy, I get a kick out of that guy.'

"Well, that's not what I want. I feel I'm capable of more than that. I don't want people to leave chuckling. I want them to leave gaping. I don't want to do things where the end result is a laugh."

Such an attitude is a bit of a gamble on Cactus' part, since he probably could take the safe route and be a fairly successful comedic performer. His "Slaughter House" interviews with Kevin Sullivan in the NWA were manic to say the least, to wit:

Sullivan: "Hey, Cactus Jack, you know what my father said to me when I was three years old?"

Cactus: "Get out?"

Followed, of course, by the obligatory Three Stooges-style slap-around.

Cactus is nobody's stooge, which may be why he isn't working for a major office. He spends his time well, polishing his routine in independent shows and watching tapes. Tapes of Bruiser Brody, among others.

Before anyone howls and bemoans Cactus being mentioned in the same paragraph as the late Frank Goodish, let's state for the record that Cactus Jack does not purport to be the next Bruiser Brody. But he is learning some lessons from the guy, and who better to learn from?

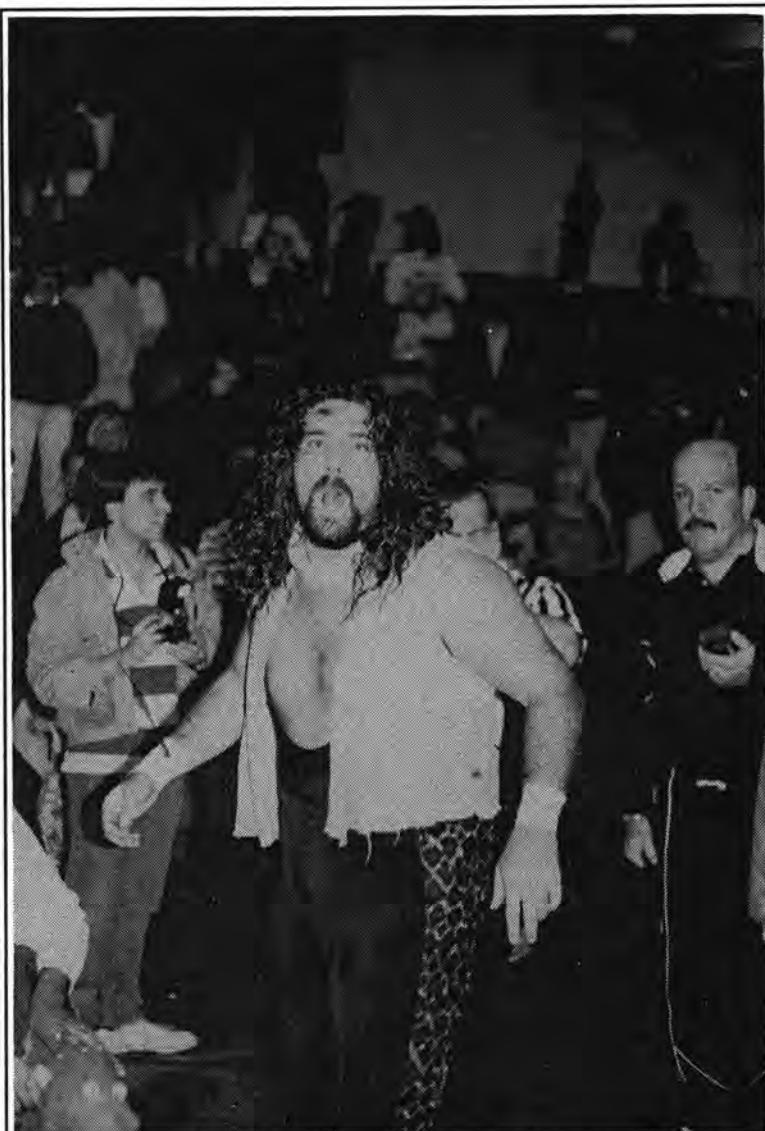
When Brody started out, he wasn't beneath getting a few yucks now and again. While others were laughing, he was learning. And doing. When he died, Brody was among the most respected serious performers in the history of the business. He could make you forget what you saw was a work and stand in wonder.

That's what Cactus Jack wants to do.

"I love what Brody did," Cactus said. "I'm not trying to copy him. What he did and what I do is like night and day. But he made you take his matches seriously. I don't want to be like Bruiser Brody. That would be asking a lot. I want to create the same feelings he did."

And the style Cactus has chosen to pursue that goal is, well, a style unto itself. You could call the guy a brawler, but that's too simple. Best to let him tell it:

"I've noticed there are three types of wrestlers who have success. Guys who are powerful, guys who fly and guys who are great technicians. Well, I'm none of those. Usually that translates into doing nothing in wrestling."



Cactus Jack

"But I found, through time, that I could take bumps that would leave other people hurt or sore, but wouldn't affect me the same way. I can't bench 300 pounds or fly across the ring, but I can absorb punishment."

"So I've tried to come up with ways to exploit that, and I think I have. I'm a power wrestler who doesn't have much power, a flying wrestler that doesn't really fly. But I give the illusion of being both."

"And, I might add, it seems like every independent group has a guy taking my bumps. So I've really worked hard at improving the quality of my matches."

Cactus says he doesn't want to be remembered as just a bump wrestler. But he talks freely about his bumps, especially the ring apron elbow drop, which he first used while working for Jerry Jarrett's Memphis promotion.

"The first time I did it was in Louisville in a tag match. I went to hit Robert Fuller with it, he moved, and the crowd went 'Ooooooh!' I'm not the first to do it, Buddy Roberts was, but I think he'd be the first to tell you that I've taken it one step further."

Cactus isn't doing the drop in his current indie stints, much to the disappointment of hip-replacement surgeons across America.

Contrary to popular belief, Cactus can be hurt, although he laughs about an NWA road agent who asked him to do the elbow drop every night, then expressed disbelief when Cactus refused. Yet, he plans to take the move further — and maybe higher.

"Yeah, I'm definitely going to take it one step farther," he said. "Maybe one step higher, too, although I don't want to give anything away."

"But the place to do that, from now on, is on a big show or on television, when it's important. From time-to-time I may do it at a spot show. But I think I work hard enough to keep people happy without doing it. Hey, your body can only accept so much."

Yeah, but why can your body accept that, Cactus?

"I think it's because I have a fat ass," he laughs.

Cactus' gluteus maximus doesn't hurt him in his other bumps, either, especially the one where he gets knocked off the ring apron onto his back. Most remember Cactus taking that bump against Mil Mascaras on an NWA Clash special. He remembers taking it in Memphis and winding up in a pool of blood.

"You won't see that one for a while," he said.

"He's worked with injuries, that's for sure: "The worst was when I hurt my back falling off a scaffold in Memphis, but I kept working. That's what I was taught by Dom (DeNucci, Cactus' mentor and trainer). If there's any way possible for you to work, you work."

But enough bump talk. Let's look at where Cactus Jack is headed, at least in terms of his ring work and ring persona.

"I'm looking forward to finding out why my ring persona is myself," Cactus said. "I don't know, I've always been a (heel), but I think a lot of people want to like me, just like they want to like Jim Cornette. There will always be people who like your style, or who like you because you're entertaining."

"I don't care about heat. Interest is what I want. I remember a match I had against Brian Adias in the UWF. It was the first match I ever had where everything made sense. Everything was psychologically correct."

"But afterwards, I felt like people were bored. I wondered why they didn't make noise. They were watching very intently. To me, that's one step up from heat."

As for as work goes, Cactus is looking for more good wrestling and less good bumps: "Like Bobby Eaton. I mean, Bobby's sort of in a different class, but he takes some great bumps, yet, he primarily is known as a great wrestler. After a few more years, I think I can become a good wrestler."

Cactus even plans on changing his interview style around. It should be noted he's come a long way in that department already.

"I've had some great filler lines, like some of the stuff with Kevin Sullivan, but I want to see if I can do interviews that can help draw some money in this business. Again, more serious, less comedic. If I try and fail, well, I guess I can let Kevin slap me around again!"

Cactus isn't thinking about failure, however.

He's set no time limit on making it, although he would like to get with a major office soon.

"I'll probably try to get back with the NWA," he said. "I've never met Dusty (Rhodes), but the only person I had a problem with there (Ole Anderson) is gone. I'd love to go to Japan, too, although I don't know that they'd be interested in me."

At one time, nobody was interested in Cactus Jack. But he's so close to making it, it would be ludicrous to stop now. But there was a time....

"I've come close to quitting a few times, but that was mostly before I got my first break in Memphis. Even in Memphis, sometimes I'd take a big bump and hope that I couldn't get up. I honestly thought sometimes it'd be better if I got hurt seriously so I couldn't wrestle again."

"But since then the business has been pretty good to me. Even these last six months working independents, I've used it as a learning experience."

And now, editorial comment: In today's era of steroid-soaked musclemen and guys with a gimmick and nothing else, it's refreshing to see a regular work so hard to make it.

And make no mistake, that's what Cactus is, a regular guy. He's a fan who loved wrestling so much he wanted to become part of it, and he's done so without selling his soul or even selling out. He's done it by working hard.

And he's done it the old-fashioned way. Cactus doesn't kai-fabe to the point of sounding idiotic, but he does protect the business. He wants people to believe it's real.

"I worked an indie, and some lady was standing around and saying, 'Oh, this is so phony!' and laughing," Cactus said, laughing himself. "Well, by the end of my match, she didn't think it was so phony. I put a chair right in this guy's throat, hit him hard with it a few times, and just generally beat the hell out of him."

"On the way out, I saw a look of horror on her face. She said, 'That guy is just plain crazy!'"

MID-ATLANTIC MEMORIES.

A LOOK BACK AT THE N.W.A 1973-1976. BY Hitchemitch.

A few months ago I purchased an incredible wrestling find. A guy sold me his wrestling card collection. Forty eight cards from the Greensboro Coliseum in mint shape. Vintage 1971 - 1976. Man! What memories! I have been a fan for twenty five years plus and this collection contains some of my fondest teenage memories of matches and wrestlers.

When you look back at the 1970's you have to remember that there was a regional pecking order. Different promotions stayed in the set boundaries of their territories. No one ever attempted to be national, and thinking about politics and war in wrestling now it is startling to consider talent exchanges... but it happened very systematically in this respectful family.

Something else to consider is the wrestlers themselves. Harley Race was a big deal nationally, a consummate wrestler and showman. He was also a true hard - ass. Johnny Valentine was the toughest man in the mid - atlantic area. Everyone feared this guy because quite simply he beat people up. You could give Valentine your best shot, he expected that, but few could take his. Only Race and Wahoo McDaniel could go with Johnny the Champ. It is also easy to see a lot of Valentine in Ric Flair. Valentine's trademark moves of "Foot on the Ropes to Stop a Pin", "The Hard Punches", "The Brain Buster Suplex", and "Taking The Punch", all impressed a young Ric Flair.

Ole and Gene Anderson were tag team wrestling for years in the Mid - Atlantic. With the classic technique of "working on the body part" they became world tag champs several times. Ole was the power guy with the big mouth. Gene was the silent one who was a good mat wrestler and generally took the beating during the match. He had a "nervous affliction" that caused him to jerk his head. Paul Jones became a lead face when Flair and Valentine were injured in a plane crash. Yeah, I guess they were desperate to have picked the diminutive Jones for the spot.

Enough talk. Let's get to the cards. These are my top eight selections.

THANKSGIVING DAY
MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP
WRESTLING WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
GREENSBORO THUR. NOV. 22 8:15 P.M.
PROCEEDS GO TO JIM CROCKETT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH
JACK BRISCO WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION
Versus
DORY FUNK, JR. SPECIAL REFEREE LOU THESZ FORMER WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP

EASTERN HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP
JERRY BRISCO Vs TERRY FUNK

THE DESTROYER	Versus	RUFUS R. JONES
BILL WATTS	Versus	BEAUREGARD
RIP HAWK And	SWEDE HANSON	MIKE GRAHAM And EDDIE GRAHAM
PLUS 4 OTHER BOUTS		

Thanksgiving was a holiday wrestling tradition in Greensboro and this card had all the big names and big titles. The Funk and the Briscos were to be in town. Jack and Jerry Brisco had been pretty regular in the area after Johnny Weaver stepped down. It's funny, the Funks always seemed to be heels; Dory the quiet champion and Terry the hot head. The fan favorite Briscos won these matches and looking back I'm still shocked that Terry Funk lost 2 out of three falls. Funk was the first guy I ever saw that did a suplex over the ropes into the ring. The other thing I remember is Mike Graham lifting Swede Hanson over his head with one arm. Everyone in attendance was shocked.

MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP
WRESTLING WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
 GREENSBORO THUR. JULY 4 8:15 P.M.

MID-ATLANTIC HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP
 **JOHNNY VALENTINE** Versus **SONNY KING**
 7 FT. FENCE MATCH
 **SWEDE HANSON** vs **THE DESTROYER**

MID-ATLANTIC TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP
RIC FLAIR And **HAWK** Versus **BOB BRUGGERS** And **PAUL JONES**

TOMMY SEIGLER Versus **RICK FERRARA**
 
DANNY MILLER And **ABE JACOBS** Versus **BILL WHITE** And **MIKE PAIDOURIS**

KLONDIKE BILL Versus **TWO TON HARRIS** * **KEN DILLINGER** Versus **SCOTT CASEY**

Thurs July 4th 1974 This was an early card with the legendary Johnny Valentine. Johnny the champ wasn't the most gifted guy with the gab but god was he tough. I think he said more with the kick your ass look and taking the punch than anyone. He was a menacing violent figure. Oh and notice who is teaming up with his "uncle" Rip Hawk. As close as I can tell this is Ric Flair's first match in Greensboro.

MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP
WRESTLING WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
 GREENSBORO THUR. JULY 3 8:15 P.M.

DOUBLE MAIN EVENT
 **ANDRE THE GIANT & PAUL JONES** Versus 
OLE & GENE ANDERSON

U. S. HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH
JOHNNY VALENTINE vs **HARLEY RACE**
KEN PATERA vs **MR. FUGI** * **RUFUS R. JONES** vs **JERRY BLACKWELL**

GREAT MALENKO Versus **ABE JACOBS** * **OX BAKER** Versus **DANNY MILLER**
KLONDIKE BILL And **SANDY SCOTT** Versus **TWO TON HARRIS** And **FRANK MONTE**
STEVE KEIRN Versus **JOE SOTO** * **RON STARR** Versus **DON SERRANO**

Thursday July 3rd 1975 A 21-MAN BATTLE ROYAL \$12,000 TO WINNER

This is a shift of power match in the N.W.A. in 56 minutes Johnny Valentine defeated Harley Race for the U.S. title. The Mid Atlantic area had never had the U.S. belt been held by a regional wrestler. Crockett must have flexed his muscle to get this title for his area. And what a great match. This was a classic slow burner, the first 10 minutes chops, the next 20-25 minutes was head locks and arm bars (the crowd acknowledged the battle by going for pizza and popcorn) and the last 20 kick butt high spots, floor chair shots, and false finishes, tremendous heat. And it seemed so real. when Valentine won the title, it was hitting the game winner in the 7th game. Gene and Ole Anderson won on DQ over Andre and Jones. Rufus won the battle royal.

MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP
WRESTLING
 GREENSBORO

WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
THUR. MAR. 13 8:15 P.M.

3 BIG MAIN EVENTS

INDIAN STRAP MATCH

WAHOO McDANIEL
 Versus
JOHNNY VALENTINE

**SUPER
DESTROYER**

V
S

**THE
AVENGER**

NO DISQUALIFICATIONS

RETURN GRUDGE MATCH

DUSTY RHODES VS RIC FLAIR

CHRIS TAYLOR Versus BRUTE BERNARD

MR.
FUGI And

BLACKJACK
MULLIGAN Versus

SWEDE
HANSON And CHARLIE
COOK

TIGER CONWAY vs FRANK MONTE * SANDY SCOTT vs BLUE SCORPION * STEVE KEIRN vs MR. HAYASHI

Thursday March 13 1975

This card is fresh in my memory. A triple main event. First main event: Even though they were in different matches Flair and Mulligan united to form an unstoppable tag team. During the Rhodes/Flair match, Blackjack came in to interfere and destroy Rhodes. Only the plodding presence of Chris Taylor stopped Rhodes from getting another beating. Second: The end of the Super Destroyer - Avenger feud. The Super D pinned the Avenger, who then unmasked. I think he was Red Bastien. Final event: The only time Wahoo McDaniel ever got a victory over Johnny Valentine in Greensboro. This was my first Indian strap match and with a ref trip bump McDaniel won. I still believe that no one expected Wahoo to win. That was the respect that Valentine had. Oh! And I had a ball stirring up the crowd cheering for the master of the claw hold - Super Destroyer. Nothing like a loud mouth heel fan. I even got into my first fight with a true believer....I yelled a lot!

MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP

WRESTLING

WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
 GREENSBORO

SUN. SEPT. 7

7:00
P.M.

DOUBLE MAIN EVENT

U.S. HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE MATCH

JOHNNY VALENTINE
 CHAMPION
 Versus

DUSTY RHODES

TEXAS TORNADO ELIMINATION MATCH

OLE & GENE ANDERSON

Versus

PAUL JONES And WAHOO McDANIEL

**KEN RUFUS GREAT MISSOURI
PATERA & R. JONES vs MALENKO & MAULER**

**TIM WOODS Versus BRUTE BERNARD ★ SWEDE HANSON Versus SPOILER
NO. 2**

TIGER CONWAY Versus DOUG GILBERT * ART NELSON Versus KLONDIKE BILL

CHARLIE FULTON And BILL HOWARD Versus GREG PETERSON And TONY ROCCA

Sunday Sept 7th 1975

Fondly remembered as "The Night Dusty Got His" or "Get Paul Jones". You know you are a warped guy when you are a heel fan at 12 years old. Yep, that's me! Anyway the memories of this card are many. The first main event was changed to Gene and Ole versus Wahoo and Tim Woods not Paul Jones. I went nuts and started yelling that Paul Jones was a gutless coward. I always wondered if the wrestlers could hear you or not. Well I got my answer. Before the match begins, Paul Jones picks up the house mike and explains in his broken obviously shaken state that he has a hurt knee and the doctors will not let him wrestle. I yell "Bullshit! Get Chicken Jones!" during this sad speech. Wahoo grabs the microphone "Somebody said that Paul Jones is a chicken." I yell "It's me, Wahoo! Jones is gutless, Beerack,

Squawk, Cawl" Wahoo: "I know Paul Jones and ..." He did not finish his statement because Ole attacked him! Wahoo hit him with the microphone and a huge brawl ensued. I just kept yelling for Ole and Gene to get a piece of Jones and they tried as P.J. stumbled out of the ring back to the dressing room. I did not think that could be topped. I was wrong.

Johnny Valentine versus Dusty Rhodes left a life long impression. The card before Dusty beat up Valentine pretty bad. As Johnny was leaving the ring after a D.Q. Rhodes jumped from the ring apron to the floor with an elbow to Valentine's head. Valentine looked launched into the ringside seats and was helped to the dressing room by the referee. This was the revenge match. No one did that to the Champ! I guess you can tell that I was a mark at this time but everyone knew Rhodes was going to get killed that night in the rematch. It was a brutal slaughter. Dusty had offense for 10 minutes but the match went thirty five. Rhodes was bleeding from his head and more shocking from his arm. Valentine repeatedly dropped elbows on Rhodes Bloody arm and shoulder, the ring had a huge bloody stain in the far corner. Valentine never went for the pin and continued to punish Rhodes. He climbed to the second rope and dropped more elbows on the injured Dream. Finally the referee stopped the match and called for help to stop Valentine. After two or three minutes Wahoo came out to help in his brown slacks and black shoes. Valentine saw him coming and attacked him as he got on the ring apron, running his head into the top of the ring post. Wahoo fell to the floor in a bloody heap. Johnny then turned to beat Rhodes some more. Dusty looked nasty and tried top sit up on all fours. Valentine climbed to the second rope and cut him down with another elbow drop. I hope this sounds good but it's far from finished. Wahoo climbed back up on the ring apron and was met by a Valentine sledge hammer fist. Out of the back came more help... for Valentine! Hey! He was out numbered! Ole and Gene Anderson ran out to attack Wahoo and pointed Valentine toward the bloody pulp that was Dusty Rhodes. Valentine continued to hammer Rhodes. After a few minutes Rufus Jones, Tim Woods, Tiger Conway and the other prelim faces dove into the fray to save Wahoo and Rhodes. Ole and Gene fought across the ring as Valentine drug Rhodes with them beating and biting his bleeding arm. Those three guys fought like hell and suddenly dived out of the ring into a shower of cups and popcorn boxes. The police had to escort them to the dressing room. The match was amazingly intense and I'm surprised I can recall it so vividly. I did have a small part too! I told the ambulance driver to take his time getting to the ring. I told you I was warped!

MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP

WRESTLING **WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM**
GREENSBORO **SUN. SEPT. 28** **7:00 P.M.**

U.S. HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE MATCH
WAHOO Mc DANIEL **Versus** **JOHNNY VALENTINE** **CHAMPION**

WORLD TAG TEAM TITLE MATCH
OLE AND GENE ANDERSON **CHAMPIONS** **Versus** **DUSTY RHODES** **And** **PAUL JONES**

BOUNTY MATCH **RAY STEVENS** **vs** **TIM WOODS**

RIC FLAIR **Versus** **TIGER CONWAY, JR.**

GREAT **KEN** **★** **SPOILER** **THE**
MALENKO **vs** **PATERA** **★** **NO. 2** **vs** **AVENGER**

JERRY BLACKWELL & MIKE "THE JUDGE" DUBOIS **vs** **DANNY MILLER & STEVE KERN**

BOB BRUGGERS **Versus** **TWO TON HARRIS**

Sunday September 28th 1975

You can not write about the Greensboro Coliseum without a real blow by blow Valentine versus McDaniel match. I guess it's pretty obvious I'm a big Johnny Valentine fan. He struck a demonic figure in his black robe and red lining. A girl at work at the Big Bear Grocery Store told me with a straight face that "that guy... I hate him. That man is the Devil." Anyway Wahoo and Valentine beat each other to death. Sweat flying, singeing flesh, and a crowd stunned into awe. It's really difficult to explain but imagine two guys that never backed down. Wahoo throwing bombs and Valentine not selling. Then Johnny throwing a knee to the gut while in the corner or a forearm while pulling McDaniel over the top rope. Just brutal stiff work. Every hardcore would be a fan if they saw Valentine.



MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP

WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM

GREENSBORO

SUN. NOV. 9

7:15
P.M.

17 BIG MATCHES

U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT

WITH NAMES SUCH AS



RED BASTION
DUSTY RHODES
RUFUS R. JONES
OLE ANDERSON

RAY STEVENS
TERRY FUNK
GENE ANDERSON
STEVE STRONG



SUPER STAR BILLY GRAHAM
KEN PATERA
PAUL JONES
TIM WOODS
HARLEY RACE

BLACKJACK MULLIGAN
WAHOO McDANIEL
PROFESSOR MALENKO
TIGER CONWAY, JR.

Sunday November 9th 1975
THE TOURNAMENT

After the plane crash that crippled Johnny Valentine and hurt Ric Flair, Bob Bruggers, and David Crockett there had to be a tournament for the vacant U.S. Title. What a line up and a sell out crowd! This was a big deal for the N.W.A. wrestlers from all over were brought in for the one night U.S. Title.

Here are the brackets and how the tourney went.

First Round Results

Rufus R Jones pinned Steve Strong
Terry Funk p. Red Bastien
Blackjack Mulligan p. Ken Patera
Dusty Rhodes p. Prof. Boris Malenko
Wahoo McDaniel p. Superstar Billy Graham
Harley Race p. Tiger Conway
Paul Jones p. Ole Anderson
Johnny Weaver Decision over Gene Anderson
(There was a group of five judges for decisions -
Head Judge Jack Adkisson)

Second Round Results

Funk p. Rufus
Rhodes p. Black Jack
Race D.Q. over Wahoo
Jones p. Weaver

Semi - Final

Funk over Rhodes by count out
Jones pinned Race with the Thesz press.

Finals

Funk pins Jones in 18 minutes.

Attendance 15,076 sellout 1000 turned away.

The Tourney ran 3 1/2 hours.

The Greensboro Daily News ran 2 huge articles before and after the tournament. The paper treated this as a real sporting event.



MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP
**WRESTLING
TOURNAMENT**

FOR THE U.S.
HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

**TONIGHT
7:15 P.M.**

**GREENSBORO
COLISEUM**

The Winner Of This Tournament Will
Be The New U.S. Heavyweight Champ!

**16 BIG
MATCHES!**



—Participants Include—

OLE ANDERSON	TERRY FUNK
DUSTY RHODES	WAHOO McDANIEL
BLACK JACK MULLIGAN	HARLEY RACE
GENE ANDERSON	PAUL JONES
KEN PATERA	RAY STEVENS
RED BASTINE	PROF. BORIS MALENKO
TIGER CONWAY, JR.	RUFUS R. JONES
TIM WOODS	STEVE STRONG
SUPER-STAR BILLY GRAHAM	

TICKET PRICES
All Seats Reserved **\$5 and \$6**
(Children - Age 12 and under - \$2.50 in \$5 Section)

**TICKETS ON SALE AT THE
GREENSBORO COLISEUM BOX OFFICE**

It was a huge surprise that Jones got to the finals and a bigger surprise that Funk won in Greensboro. A month later the card featured Jones won the title from Funk. Terry promptly won the world title from Jack Brisco two weeks later. Good job Terry!

Packed House Watches As Funk Wins Mat Title

BY BOB HELLER
Staff Sports Writer

The hot dogs had all disappeared. So had the pizza and the ice for the soft drinks.

But after 3 1/2 hours and 14 professional wrestling matches, the crowd remained. A few youngsters no doubt had to make it home early, but when the new U.S. Heavyweight Champion of the National Wrestling Alliance was crowned Sunday night, most of the 15,076 fans remained.

They were less than thrilled with Terry Funk's 18-minute

victory over Paul Jones in the final event, but such life...

"It was like two weeks worth of wrestling in one night," the obviously drained Funk panted in the dressing room. "All the little injuries accumulate and there's no time to do anything about them."

"It was grueling, very grueling both physically and mentally. I imagine I lost close to 20 pounds in those four matches."

"I honestly don't know if I'd go through all this again. But I can tell you this is definitely the highlight of my wrestling

career."

The 29-year-old Funk of Amarillo, Tex., is a member of the well-known wrestling family. His father Dory died in the ring two years ago and his brother, 32-year-old Dory Jr., once held the NWA's world title for over four years.

AS IS ALMOST always the case, there was action both in and around the blue-aproned ring. In fact, some of the fiercest brawling took place just a few feet in front of the ringside fans.

Financially, the evening was a huge success, both for the Coliseum management and for the wrestlers participating under the auspices of Jim Crockett Promotions of Charlotte.

There were a few kinks in the performance—like wrestler Tim Woods didn't dress due to a hand injury, combatant Ray Stevens was stranded in the Atlanta airport and the concession stands closed up shop less than two hours into the program—but otherwise, the show went on.

MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPIONSHIP
WRESTLING GREENSBORO COLISEUM
GREENSBORO, N.C. SUN. DEC. 26 7:30 P.M.

DOUBLE MAIN EVENT

WORLD TAG TEAM TITLE MATCH
OLE & GENE ANDERSON Versus **RIC FLAIR And GREG VALENTINE**
NO DISQUALIFICATIONS

WAHOO McDANIEL vs BLACKJACK MULLIGAN
SGT. JACQUES GOULET & BRUTE BERNARD Versus **MIGHTY IGOR And DUSTY RHODES**

KEN PATERA Versus KIM DUCK
GIRLS: **VIVIAN ST. JOHN Versus JOYCE GRABLE** GIRLS

JOHNNY EAGLE vs RANDY POFFO * HERB GALLANT vs DOUG SOMERS * KLONDIKE BILL vs BLUE SCORPION

Sunday December 26th 1976

This card is legend in the NWA in that there was a changing of the guard. It broke the string of big cards for the Minnesota Wrecking Crew. In a no D.Q. match Ric Flair and Greg Valentine ran Gene Anderson's arm and shoulder into the ringpost for the submission. Legend has it that the Andersons wanted to put "Family" Ric and punk Greg in their place and it was decided the hard way. Also note Randy Poffo in the prelims along with 1950's wildman Brute Bernard. This card ushered in the era of Flair, Wahoo, and Rhodes building to the prime 1980 - 1985. The key people were beginning to find a home.



DEDICATION: TO JOHNNY VALENTINE
FOR THE MEMORIES AND OLE
ANDERSON WHO ASKED.

DAVE MELTZER'S 65 BEST MATCHES OF 1990

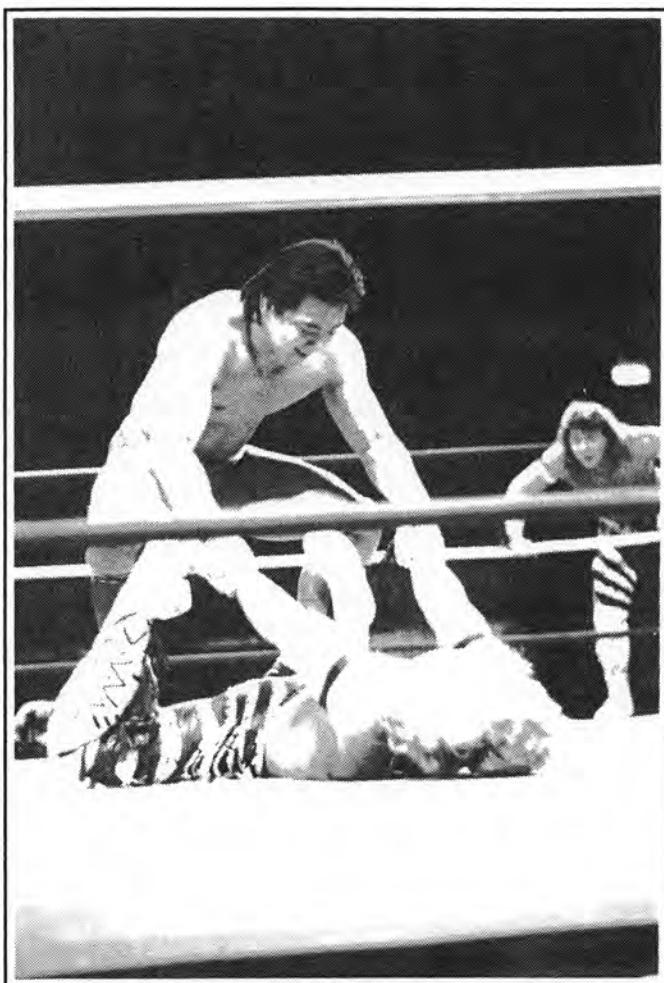
1. Jushin Riger vs. Naoki Sano 1/31 Osaka
2. Toshiaki Kawada & Mitsuhiro Misawa & Kenta Kobashi vs. Jumbo Tsuruta & Masa Fuchi & Akira Taue 10/19 Tokyo
3. Hiroshi Hase & Kensuke Sasaki vs. Keiji Muto & Masa Chono 11/10 Tokyo
4. Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Mitsuhiro Misawa 6/8 Tokyo
5. Atsushi Onita & Tarzan Goto vs. Masanobu Kurisu & Dragon Master 4/1 Tokyo
6. Fantastics vs. Joe Malenko & Tsuyoshi Kikuchi 9/1 Tokyo
7. Hiroshi Hase vs. Keiji Muto 9/14 Hiroshima
8. Midnight Express vs. Southern Boys 7/8 Baltimore
9. Mitsuhiro Misawa & Kenta Kobashi & Akira Taue vs. Jumbo Tsuruta & Great Kabuki & Masa Fuchi 5/26 Tokyo
10. Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger 2/25 Greensboro
11. Jumbo Tsuruta vs. Mitsuhiro Misawa 9/1 Tokyo
12. Jushin Riger vs. Pegasus Kid 11/1 Tokyo
13. Yoshihiro Asai & Kendo & Super Astro vs. Negro Casas & El Espanto Jr. & Shu El Guerrero 3/1 Tokyo
14. Terry Gordy & Steve Williams vs. Stan Hansen & Danny Spivey 4/19 Yokohama
15. Ric Flair vs. Brian Pillman 2/13 Gainesville, GA
16. Riki Choshu & George Takano vs. Genichiro Tenryu & Tiger Mask 2/10 Tokyo
17. Akira Hokuto vs. Manami Toyoda 8/19 Tokyo
18. Ric Flair & Arn Anderson vs. Rock & Roll Express 2/7 Beaumont, TX
19. Hiroshi Hase & Kensuke Sasaki vs. Shiro Koshinaka & Takayuki Iizuka 12/13 Tokyo
20. Ric Flair & Sting & Arn Anderson vs. Buzz Sawyer & Great Muta & Dragon Master 1/15 Johnson City, TN
21. Jumbo Tsuruta & Akira Taue vs. Mitsuhiro Misawa & Toshiaki Kawada 12/7 Tokyo
22. Jushin Riger vs. Pegasus Kid 8/19 Tokyo
23. Yoshihiro Asai vs. Negro Casas 3/2 Nagoya
24. Aja Kong vs. Bull Nakano 11/14 Yokohama
25. El Dandy vs. El Satanic 12/14 Mexico City
26. Ric Flair vs. Ricky Morton 3/13 Columbus, GA
27. Riki Choshu vs. Keiji Muto 5/24 Tokyo
28. Midnight Express vs. Rock & Roll Express 2/25 Greensboro
29. Doom vs. Barry Windham & Arn Anderson 12/16 St. Louis
30. Aja Kong & Bison Kimura & Grizzly Iwamoto vs. Kaoru Maeda & Mika Takahashi & Manami Toyoda 6/4 Tokyo
31. Jumbo Tsuruta & Great Kabuki & Masa Fuchi vs. Mitsuhiro Misawa & Toshiaki Kawada & Akira Taue 7/17 Tokyo
32. Toshiaki Kawada vs. Kenta Kobashi 6/30 Tokyo
33. Jushin Riger & Akira Nogami vs. Pegasus Kid & Naoki Sano 2/10 Tokyo
34. Jumbo Tsuruta & Akira Taue & Masa Fuchi vs. Mitsuhiro Misawa & Toshiaki Kawada & Kenta Kobashi 8/18 Tokyo
35. Jushin Riger vs. Pegasus Kid 3/19 Tokyo
36. Ric Flair vs. Sting 8/24 East Rutherford, NJ
37. Yoshihiro Asai vs. Negro Casas 6/7 Tokyo
38. Aja Kong & Bison Kimura vs. Grizzly Iwamoto & Bull Nakano 8/19 Tokyo
39. Genichiro Tenryu & Samson Fuyuki & Toshiaki Kawada vs. Jumbo Tsuruta & Great Kabuki & Mighty Inoue 1/25 Koriyama
40. El Signo & El Texano & Negro Navarro vs. El Gran Hamada & Perro Aguayo & Kendo 6/7 Tokyo
41. Mr. Perfect vs. Tito Santana 7/16 Omaha, NE
42. Jushin Riger vs. Negro Casas 12/26 Tokyo
43. Mr. Perfect vs. Roddy Piper 12/28 New York
44. Jushin Riger vs. Owen Hart 1/30 Tokyo
45. Genichiro Tenryu vs. Randy Savage 4/13 Tokyo
46. Terry Gordy & Steve Williams vs. Jumbo Tsuruta & Akira Taue 11/25 Yokohama
47. Mr. Perfect vs. Big Bossman 10/30 Fort Wayne, IN
48. Arn Anderson vs. Brian Pillman 6/25 Marietta, GA
49. Rick & Scott Steiner vs. Midnight Express 10/1 Gainesville, GA
50. Brian Pillman & Tom Zenk vs. Midnight Express 4/9 Greenwood, MS
51. Rick & Scott Steiner vs. Nasty Boys 10/27 Chicago
52. Brian Pillman & Tom Zenk vs. Midnight Express 2/28 Altoona, PA
53. Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger 9/5 Asheville, NC
54. Yoshihiro Asai & Kendo & El Hijo Del Santo vs. Cuchillo & Negro Casas & Fuerza Guerrera 6/1 Tokyo
55. Masa Saito & Shinya Hashimoto vs. Keiji Muto & Masa Chono 4/27 Tokyo
56. Genichiro Tenryu vs. George Takano 10/19 Yokohama
57. Fantastics vs. Johnny Ace & Kenta Kobashi 9/7 Fukui
58. Jushin Riger & Masa Chono vs. Shinya Hashimoto & Naoki Sano 1/6 Tokyo
59. Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger 4/23 Marietta, GA
60. Eddie Gilbert vs. Cactus Jack 11/11 Bensalem, PA
61. Madusa vs. Aja Kong 9/1 Tokyo
62. Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior 4/1 Toronto
63. Stan Lane & Eddie Gilbert vs. Terry Funk & Cactus Jack 11/10 Drexel Hill, PA
64. Rockers vs. Hart Foundation 4/23 Austin, TX
65. Doom vs. Rick & Scott Steiner 6/13 Charleston, SC

JAPAN TOURS OF ACTIVE WRESTLERS (as of January 1, 1991)

Johnny Ace	8	Top Gun	5
Chris Adams	3	Scott Hall	5
Andre the Giant	30	Stan Hansen	61
Angel of Death	1	Bret Hart	6
Perro Aguayo	9	Owen Hart	7
Brad Armstrong	1	Salman Hashimikov	9
Steve Armstrong	4	Billy Jack Haynes	3
Super Astro	2	Michael Hayes	2
Jimmy Backlund	4	Hercules	1
The Barbarian	5	Hulk Hogan	21
Black Bart	1	Honkeytonk Man	1
Vladimir Berkovich	3	Tim Horner	1
Bam Bam Bigelow	17	Austin Idol	3
Blackman	3	Invader #1	1
Brian Blair	2	Bill Irwin	4
Wayne Bloom	1	Marty Janetty	1
Scotty the Body	1	Jeff Jarrett	1
Matt Borne	4	Kato	1
Big Bossman	2	Kendo	3
Dino Bravo	3	Steve Keirn	3
El Brazo	1	Dynamite Kid	19
Brazo de Oro	5	Pegasus Kid	9
Brazo de Plata	5	Kimala	3
Killer Tim Brooks	9	Giant Kimala II	2
Badnews Brown	29	Rex King	1
Jim Brunzell	4	Brian Knobbs	1
Bushwhacker Butch	5	Ivan Koloff	7
Bushwhacker Luke	5	Nikita Koloff	3
Abdullah the Butcher	54	Konnan	1
Larry Cameron	2	Danny Kroffat	10
Canek	13	Buddy Landel	1
Dos Caras	13	Stan Lane	1
Negro Casas	3	Jerry Lawler	2
Steve Casey	3	Kato Kung Lee	2
Carlitos Colon	3	Legion of Doom Animal	11
Mike Davis	3	Legion of Doom Hawk	11
Joel Deaton	8	Lizmark	2
Col. DeBeers	1	Al Madril	2
Demolition Ax	21	Dean Malenko	5
Demolition Crush	3	Joe Malenko	8
Demolition Smash	3	Dutch Mantell	2
Ted DiBiase	16	Rick Martel	6
Junkyard Dog	1	Mil Mascaras	22
Steve Doll	1	Butch Masters	1
Shane Douglas	1	Wahoo McDaniel	16
Jim Duggan	3	The Minotaur	1
Earthquake	1 (lasted several years)	Pirata Morgan	1
Eric Embry	1	Rip Morgan	3
Mike Enos	1	Ricky Morton	2
Jerry Estrada	1	Don Muraco	6
Jose Luis Feliciano	1	Dick Murdoch	46
Manny Fernandez	6	Jim Neidhart	2
La Fiera	2	Skywalker Nitron	2
Ric Flair	11	John Nord	2
Kung Fu	1	Norman	1
Bobby Fulton	3	Rip Oliver	5
Dory Funk Jr.	35	Paul Orndorff	4
Jimmy Jack Funk	2	Bob Orton	8
Terry Funk	33	Blue Panther	2
Doug Furnas	10	Ken Patera	6
One Man Gang	2	Mr. Perfect	5
Jimmy Garvin	2	Darryl Peterson	3
Ron Garvin	1	Brian Pillman	1
Robert Gibson	2	Tom Prichard	2
Eddie Gilbert	1	Harley Race	35
Terry Gordy	26	Brad Rheingans	9
Fuerza Guerrera	1	Dustin Rhodes	3
Chavo Guerrero	17	Dusty Rhodes	11
Hector Guerrero	3	Tommy Rich	4
Shu el Guerrero	1	Jake Roberts	4

Tommy Rogers	3
Rip Rogers	2
Randy Rose	3
Buddy Rose	3
Jacques Rougeau	1
Raymond Rougeau	2
David Samartino	4
Jerry Saggs	1
Fatu the Samoan	2
Kokina the Samoan	6
Wild Samoan Samu	7
Ricky Santana	1
Tito Santana	3
El Hijo Del Santo	1
Randy Savage	1
Samoan Savage	1
Buzz Sawyer	8
Mike Sharpe	4
Iron Sheik	4
Dick Slater	17
Sgt. Slaughter	4
Saba Simba	1
Tiger Jeet Singh	48
Tracy Smothers	4
Norman Smiley	8
Davey Boy Smith	13
Johnny Smith	5
Jimmy Snuka	17
Danny Spivey	9
Italian Stallion	3
Ron Starr	5
Ricky Steamboat	9
Rick Steiner	1

Sting	1
Soul Taker	4
Pat Tanaka	2
Terry Taylor	1
The Terminator	2
Black Terry	1
TNT	3
The Trooper	1
The Undertaker	1
Greg Valentine	7
Jimmy Valiant	3
Big Van Vader	22
Sid Vicious	1
Villano III	2
Villano IV	1
Villano V	2
Nikolai Volkoff	8
Kerry Von Erich	8
Kevin Von Erich	7
Michael Wall Street	1
The Warlord	1
Ultimate Warrior	1
Biff Wellington	4
Pez Whatley	2
Barry Windham	3
Steve Williams	16
Chris Youngblood	1
Mark Youngblood	1
Victor Zangiev	6
Chimur Zarasav	4
Larry Zbyszko	6
Tom Zenk	5



Naoki Sano



Atsushi Onita (Before the Tears Fall)

AMATEUR WRESTLING CREDENTIALS OF TODAY'S PRO WRESTLERS

UNITED STATES

GENERAL ADNON (ADNON KAISY) - 1959 NCAA tournament, 4th place, 191 pounds.

GARY ALLBRIGHT - 1982 national AAU tournament, 3rd place, free style, heavyweight. . . 1982 USA free style nationals, first place, heavyweight. . . 1984 USA free style nationals, 3rd place, heavyweight. . . 1982 USA Greco-Roman nationals, 5th place, heavyweight. . . 1984 USA Greco-Roman nationals, first place, heavyweight. . . 1982 NCAA tournament, 7th place, heavyweight. . . 1984 NCAA tournament, 2nd place, heavyweight. . . 1986 NCAA tournament, 3rd place, heavyweight.

RIKI CHOSHU (MITSUO YOSHIDA) - 1971 USA Greco-Roman nationals, 2nd place, 198 pounds.

CHEETAH KID (TED PETTY) - 1972 Junior College nationals, 3rd place, 190 pounds. . . 1974 Junior College nationals, first place, 177 pounds.

DARRYL PETERSON - 1982 Junior College nationals, first place, heavyweight.

BRAD RHEINGANS - 1976 Olympic Games, 4th place, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1980 Olympic Team (U.S. boycotted Olympics), Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1975 Pan American Games, gold medal, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1979 Pan American Games, gold medal, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1976 World Cup, gold medal, free style, 198 pounds. . . 1976 national AAU tournament, first place, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1977 national AAU tournament, first place, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1978 national AAU tournament, first place, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1979 national AAU tournament, first place, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1980 national AAU tournament, first place, Greco-Roman, 220 pounds. . . 1977 USA Greco-Roman nationals, first place, 220 pounds. . . 1979 USA Greco-Roman nationals, first place, 220 pounds. . . 1975 NCAA tournament, 4th place, 190 pounds. . . 1972 NCAA Division II tournament, 6th place, 190 pounds. . . 1974 NCAA Division II tournament, 2nd place, 177 pounds. . . 1975 NCAA Division II tournament, first place, 190 pounds.

BUZZ SAWYER (BRUCE WOYAN) - 1976 Junior (teenage) nationals, 3rd place, free style, 191 pounds.

RICK STEINER (ROBERT RECHSTEINER) - 1980 Junior College nationals, 4th place, 177 pounds.

SCOTT STEINER (SCOTT RECHSTEINER) - 1986 NCAA tournament, 6th place, 190 pounds. . . 1985 Midlands tournament, 4th place, 190 pounds.

BARON VON RASCHKE (JAMES RASCHKE) - 1962 national AAU tournament, 4th place, free style, heavyweight. . . 1964 national AAU tournament, first place, free style, heavyweight. . . 1966 national AAU tournament, 2nd place, free style, heavyweight. . . 1964 national AAU tournament, first place, Greco-Roman, heavyweight.

MICHAEL WALL STREET (MIKE ROTUNDA) - 1980 national AAU tournament, 6th place, free style, 220 pounds. . . 1981 national AAU tournament, 6th place, free style, heavyweight.

STEVE WILLIAMS - 1979 NCAA tournament, 6th place, heavyweight. . . 1980 NCAA tournament, 5th place, heavyweight. . . 1980 NCAA tournament, 3rd place, heavyweight. . . 1981 NCAA tournament, 2nd place, heavyweight.

YOSHIAKI YATSU - 1977 U.S. national AAU tournament, 2nd place, free style

JAPAN

RIKI CHOSHU (MITSUO YOSHIDA) - 1972 Olympic games, didn't place, free style, 220 pounds.

HIROSHI HASE - 1984 Olympic games, 6th place, free style, 177 pounds.

TOSHIAKI KAWADA - 1981 high school national championships, first place, 165 pounds.

MITSUHARU MISAWA - 1980 high school national championships, first place, 187 pounds.

MASA SAITO - 1964 Olympic games, 6th place, free style, heavyweight.

MINORU SUZUKI - 1988 Olympic trials, 3rd place, free style, 177 pounds.

GORO TSURUMI (HIROSHI YAGI) - 1969 Japanese collegiate championships, first place, heavyweight.

JUMBO TSURUTA (TOMOMI TSURUTA) - 1972 Olympic games, didn't place, free style, heavyweight.

YOSHIAKI YATSU - 1980 Olympic team (Japan boycotted games), free style, heavyweight. . . 1978 Japanese national championships, first place, heavyweight. 1979 Japanese national championships, first place, heavyweight. . . 1987 Japanese national championships, first place, heavyweight

CANADA

EARTHQUAKE (JOHN TENTA) - 1982 Junior World championships, 1st place, free style, super-heavyweight

OWEN HART - 1986 Canadian collegiate meet, first place, 190 pounds. . . 1986 Canadian amateur nationals, 2nd place, free style, 190 pounds.

OTHERS

IRON SHEIK (KHOSROW VAZIRI) - 1968 Olympic games, didn't place, Greco-Roman, 177 pounds

1990 WRESTLING OBSERVER RATINGS

These ratings are based on the results of our annual survey of 33 responding members of our impromptu editorial board. The wrestlers' spot in this year's poll is listed on the left. On the right is where the wrestler finished in previous years polls. These ratings were to be based strictly on in-ring ability and effort displayed throughout the year.

	89	88	87	86
1. Jushin Riger.....	2	5	28	65
2. Ric Flair.....	1	2	1	1
3. Bobby Eaton.....	22	7	6	5
4. Mitsuharu Misawa.....	--	9	11	12
5. Mr. Perfect.....	12	24	12	59
6. Jumbo Tsuruta.....	13	32	43	32
7. Keiji Muto.....	15	25	29	58
8. Toshiaki Kawada.....	8	18	--	--
9. Naoki Sano.....	6	--	--	--
10. Pegasus Kid.....	32	32	--	--
11. Negro Casas.....	39	--	36	31
12. Genichiro Tenryu.....	5	11	27	22
13. Yoshihiro Asai.....	50	--	--	--
14. Kenta Kobashi.....	70	--	--	--
15. Scott Steiner.....	23	--	--	--
16. Terry Funk.....	4	57	41	15
17. Shawn Michaels.....	9	56	61	--
18. Hiroshi Hase.....	36	--	32	--
19. Arn Anderson.....	11	12	35	46
20. Bret Hart.....	21	21	17	15
21. Ted DiBiase.....	25	4	7	2
22. Nobuhiko Takada.....	10	7	2	7
23. Owen Hart.....	20	6	3	27
24. Brian Pillman.....	28	74	72	--
25. Randy Savage.....	17	16	19	19
26. Masa Haru Funaki.....	35	41	51	--
27. Jerry Estrada.....	45	67	--	--
28. Terry Gordy.....	26	23	30	6
29. Rick Steiner.....	24	15	52	69
30. Tommy Rogers.....	53	29	73	47
31. Riki Choshu.....	44	35	13	9
32. Ricky Steamboat.....	3	--	--	8
33. Rick Rude.....	30	--	--	--
34. Marty Janetty.....	31	--	--	--
35. Dan Kroffat.....	7	46	--	--
36. Akira Maeda.....	14	13	5	10
37. Pirata Morgan.....	39	39	52	--
38. Lex Luger.....	19	--	--	--
39. Shiro Koshinaka.....	27	10	25	50
40. Kazuo Yamazaki.....	16	19	16	--
41. Kensuke Sasaki.....	--	--	--	--
42. Stan Hansen.....	58	51	37	26
43. Shinya Hashimoto.....	42	--	--	--
44. George Takano.....	52	--	67	54
45. Steve Williams.....	50	52	34	14
46. Masa Chono.....	--	--	--	--
El Gran Hamada.....	--	--	--	--
48. Barry Windham.....	29	3	4	11
49. Jeff Jarrett.....	--	55	49	--
50. Dandy.....	--	--	--	--
51. Tsuyoshi Kikuchi.....	--	--	--	--
52. Super Astro.....	38	--	66	--
53. El Hijo del Santo.....	--	--	--	--
54. Ricky Morton.....	--	71	23	21
55. Masa Saito.....	54	20	9	--
56. Sting.....	34	26	45	--
57. Eddie Gilbert.....	60	14	21	62
58. Ron Simmons.....	--	--	--	--
59. Steve Armstrong.....	--	--	--	--
60. Terry Taylor.....	--	44	18	18
61. Tracy Smothers.....	--	--	--	--
62. Brad Armstrong.....	46	22	20	25
63. Yoshiaki Fujiwara.....	37	34	24	45
64. Stan Lane.....	--	33	42	--
65. Cactus Jack.....	--	--	--	--
Big Bossman.....	49	--	--	--

67. Minoru Suzuki.....	89	88	87	86
68. Emilio Charles Jr.....	62	--	--	--
69. Atlantis.....	55	45	--	--
70. Bobby Fulton.....	--	31	--	--
71. Tony Anthony.....	--	--	--	--
72. Johnny Smith.....	48	70	--	--
73. Tito Santana.....	64	58	60	--
74. Buddy Landel.....	--	--	--	--
Hiro Saito.....	--	--	--	--

Others ranked on three or more ballots:
 Pat Tanaka, Akira Nogami, Big Van Vader, Joe Malenko, Rick Martel, Jerry Lawler, Sam Houston, Danny Spivey, The Juicer, Billy Travis, Masa Fuchi, Scotty the Body, Tim Horner, Super Strong Machine, Shane Douglas, Mike Rotunda

RATINGS NOTES: Jushin Riger came the closest of anyone in the history of the ratings to a unanimous selection to first place. Riger was named first of 32 of 33 ballots and second on the other. Ric Flair received the other first place vote. . . As with the last three years, the oldest wrestler to crack the top 75 was Masa Saito (48). The youngest, for the fourth year in a row was Masaharu Funaki (21). Also repeating from last year, as far as native North American wrestlers, the oldest to crack the top 75 was Terry Funk (46) and the youngest was Pegasus Kid (Chris Benoit--23). . . The highest rated newcomer to the poll was Kensuke Sasaki (No. 41). . . Top finishers from last year who didn't repeat were Samson Fuyuki (No. 32), Buzz Sawyer (No. 41), Rick Martel (No. 43), Pat Tanaka (No. 56) and Joe Malenko (No. 57). . . In breaking down the wrestlers by promotion from the top 75, the NWA tops the list with 15 wrestlers, which, surprisingly enough, equal to the 15 last year and 13 from the 1988 poll. New Japan has 13, compared to 14 last year and 10 in 1988. All Japan has 12, down from 14 last year and nine in 1988. The WWF has eight, down from 10 last year and 11 in 1988. Ten are from Mexico (six from EMLL and four from UWA) as compared with eight last year, six are from the UWF from Japan, and three from the new SWS and the USWA. Currently unaffiliated with any groups right now are Ricky Steamboat, Rick Rude and Cactus Jack Manson. . . In the ten year history of the poll (dating back to 1981), Flair has finished first eight times and second twice. The only other year he finished second was in 1988, when Tatsumi Fujinami was first. . . Mitsuharu Misawa, who, as Tiger Mask, had placed in the top 15 from 1985-88, didn't place last year because he missed most of the year with major knee surgery. . . Another thing this year's poll emphasizes is the trend that fewer and fewer of the "big men" in the game are top-notch workers. Of the top 50, only eight (Tsuruta, DiBiase, Gordy, Luger, Hansen, Hashimoto, Williams and Windham) are 255+. Twelve of the top 50 are less than 220 pounds.

1990 PRO WRESTLING DIRECTORY

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION						
ANDRE THE GIANT	6-10	515	44	26	Grenoble, France	Andre Rene Rousimoff
THE BARBARIAN	6-2½	295	34	10	San Francisco, CA	Sionne Vailahi
BLACK BART	6-3½	295	35	10		Ricky Lee Jones
BRUTUS BEEFCAKE	6-2	250	33	13	Tampa, FL	Edward Leslie
BRADY BOONE	5-7	205	30	6	Tampa, FL	
BIG BOSSMAN	6-4	280	27	5	Cobb County, GA	Raymond Traylor
DINO BRAVO	6-0	268	43	21	Montreal, Québec	Adolpho Brescino
BROOKLYN BRAWLER	6-0	233	28	5	Brooklyn, NY	Steve Lombardi
JIM BRUNZELL	5-10	225	41	18	White Bear Lake, MN	Jim Brunzell
BUSHWHACKER BUTCH	5-8	238	46	26	Auckland, NZ	Robert Miller
BUSHWHACKER LUKE	5-10	235	43	26	Auckland, NZ	Brian Wickens
DEMOLITION CRUSH	6-5½	315	26	4	Studio City, CA	Bryan Adams
DEMOLITION SMASH	6-3	295	31	8	Minneapolis, MN	Barry Darsow
BLACK DEMON	6-1	238	30	8	New York, NY	Jose Luis Rivera
TED DIBIASE	6-3½	263	37	17	Jackson, MS	Ted DiBiase
SHANE DOUGLAS	5-11	247	26	4	Pittsburgh, PA	Troy Martin
HACKSAW JIM DUGGAN	6-3	310	37	13	Glens Falls, NY	James Duggan
EARTHQUAKE	6-6	440	27	4	Surrey, BC	John Tenta
HAKU	6-1	255	31	13	Auckland, NZ	Uliuli Fifita
BRET HART	6-0	228	33	14	Calgary, Alberta	Bret Hart
HERCULES	6-2	265	33	11	Tampa, FL	Raymond Fernandez
HULK HOGAN	6-5½	290	37	13	Tampa, FL	Terry Gene Bollea
MARTY JANETTY	5-10	225	28	8	Columbus, GA	Marty Janetty
KATO	5-11	225	29	7	Winnipeg, Ontario	Thomas Boric
BRIAN KNOBBS	6-2	280	26	4	Allentown, PA	Brian Knobbs
KONNAN	5-10	230	26	3	Chula Vista, CA	Carlos Espata
LEGION OF DOOM ANIMAL	6-0	295	31	8	Minneapolis, MN	Joseph Laurinaitis
LEGION OF DOOM HAWK	6-2½	278	33	8	Minneapolis, MN	Michael Hegstrand
RICK MARTEL	5-11	235	34	19	Cocoa Beach, FL	Richard Vignault
SHAWN MICHAELS	6-0	228	25	7	San Antonio, TX	Michael Hickenbottom
THE MOUNTIE	6-2	225	30	13	Montreal, Québec	Jacques Rougeau, Jr.
JIM NEIDHART	6-0	275	35	12	Tampa, FL	James Henry Neidhart
MR. PERFECT	6-2½	243	32	11	Robbinsdale, MN	Curt Hennig
RODDY PIPER	6-1	225	39	18	Hillsborough, OR	Roderick George Toombs
JIM POWERS	5-10	228	27	6	New Jersey	James Manley
DUSTIN RHODES	6-5	260	21	2	Tampa, FL	Dustin Runnels
JAKE ROBERTS	6-5	250	35	14	Stone Mountain, GA	Aurelian Smith, Jr.
PAUL ROMA	5-9½	228	30	8	Kensington, NY	Paul Centopani
BUDDY ROSE	5-11	340	41	17	Vancouver, WA	Paul Perschmann
JERRY SAGGS	6-3	285	26	4	Allentown, PA	Jerry Seganovich
TITO SANTANA	6-2½	237	36	14	Mission, TX	Merced Solis
RANDY SAVAGE	6-1	225	38	16	Tampa, FL	Randy Poffo
MIKE SHARPE	6-2	250	40	17	Hamilton, Ontario	Michael Sharpe, Jr.
SABA SIMBA	6-2	260	34	14	Lewiston, ME	Anthony White
SGT. SLAUGHTER	6-2	315	42	18	Wilmar, CT	Robert Remus
DAVEY BOY SMITH	5-10	265	28	13	Calgary, Alberta	David Smith
JIMMY SNUKA	5-10	242	47	21	Salt Lake City, UT	James Reiher

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
RICKY STEAMBOAT	5-10	225	37	15	Charlotte, NC	Richard Blood
TANAKA	5-7	190	27	5	Seattle, WA	Patrick Tanaka
TUGBOAT	6-7	425	34	6	Tampa, FL	Fred Ottman
THE UNDERTAKER	6-7½	305	28	3	San Antonio, TX	Mark Calaway
GREG VALENTINE	6-0	248	42	22	Tampa, FL	John Anthony Wisniski, Jr.
KERRY VON ERICH	6-1½	255	30	12	Lake Dallas, TX	Kerry Adkisson
KOKO B. WARE	5-6	220	32	15	Union City, TN	James Ware
THE WARLORD	6-4½	335	28	5	Minneapolis, MN	Terry Szopinski
ULTIMATE WARRIOR	6-3	268	33	5	Dallas, TX	James Hellwig
BORIS ZHUKOV	6-2	315	34	11	Roanoke, VA	James Darrell

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

ARN ANDERSON	6-1½	245	32	9	Rome, GA	Marty Lunde
BRAD ARMSTRONG	5-10	218	29	10	Marietta, GA	Robert James, Jr.
STEVE ARMSTRONG	6-0½	220	25	6	Marietta, GA	Steve James
MASTER BLASTER BLADE	6-0	280		2		Al Greene
MASTER BLASTER STEELE	6-8	305		1	Atlanta, GA	Kevin Nash
BIG CAT	6-3½	310	26	3	Kansas City, MO	Curtis Hughes
JUNKYARD DOG	6-2½	325	38	12	Baton Rouge, LA	Sylvester Ritter
BOBBY EATON	6-0	230	32	15	Charlotte, NC	Bobby Lee Eaton
RIC FLAIR	6-0	233	41	18	Charlotte, NC	Richard Fliehr
JIMMY GARVIN	5-11	235	38	15	Charlotte, NC	James Williams
ROBERT GIBSON	6-1	229	33	13	Charlotte, NC	Ruben Kane
EL GIGANTE	7-6½	405	27	1	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Jorge Gonzales
MICHAEL HAYES	6-2	247	31	14	Atlanta, GA	Michael Seitz
TIM HORNER	5-10	220	31	11	Morristown, TN	Tim Horner
BARRY HOROWITZ	5-10	220	30	8	Tampa, FL	Barry Horowitz
ALAN IRON EAGLE	6-1	228	23	1	Tampa, FL	Joe Gomez
BILL IRWIN	6-1	215	37	13	Dallas, TX	Barney Irwin
BUDDY LANDEL	6-0	239	29	11	Jacksonville, FL	William Ansor
LEX LUGER	6-4	258	32	5	Atlanta, GA	Larry Pfohl
MOTOR CITY MAD MAN	6-4	320		4		Michael Moore
DUTCH MANTELL	5-11	229	38	16	Nashville, TN	Wayne Kowan
MOONDOG REX	6-2	285	40			Randy Culley
RICKY MORTON	5-9	208	34	12	Charlotte, NC	Richard Morton
TRUCKER NORMAN	6-0	345	33	12	Atlanta, GA	Michael Shaw
BRIAN PILLMAN	5-10	215	28	4	Atlanta, GA	Brian Pillman
HARLEY RACE	6-0	248	47	31	Kansas City, KS	Harley Race
BUTCH REED	6-0	268	36	12	Kansas City, MO	Bruce Reed
DUSTY RHODES	6-0	335	45	25	Atlanta, GA	Virgil Runnels, Jr.
TOMMY RICH	6-0	212	34	16	Atlanta, GA	Thomas Richardson
RIP ROGERS	6-0	220	35	12	Seymour, IN	
IRON SHEIK	6-0	280	51	18	Fayetteville, GA	Hossein Khosrow Vaziri
RON SIMMONS	6-1	285	31	4	Warner-Robbins, GA	Ron Simmons
TRACY SMOTHERS	6-1½	228	24	8	Springfield, TN	Tracy Smothers
RICK STEINER	5-10	247	29	6	Bay City, MI	Robert Rechsteiner
SCOTT STEINER	6-0½	252	28	5	Bay City, MI	Scott Rechsteiner
STING	6-2	245	31	5	Atlanta, GA	Steven Borden
TERRY TAYLOR	6-0	230	35	12	Atlanta, GA	Paul Taylor III
SID VICIOUS	6-7½	310	30	4	West Memphis, AR	Sidney Eudy
MICHAEL WALL STREET	6-2	244	32	9	Tampa, FL	Lawrence Rotunda
BARRY WINDHAM	6-6	265	30	11	Tampa, FL	Barry Windham

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
CHRIS YOUNGBLOOD	6-0	235	23	5	Amarillo, TX	Chris Romero
MARK YOUNGBLOOD	6-0	249	27	10	Amarillo, TX	Mark Romero
LARRY ZBYSZKO	5-9	230	37	18	Pittsburgh, PA	Larry Whistler
TOM ZENK	6-1	235	32	7	Minneapolis, MN	Tom Zenk

ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING

JOHNNY ACE	6-3½	238	25	4	Clearwater, FL	John Laurinaitis
GIANT BABA	6-8	270	52	31	Niigata, Japan	Shohei Baba
ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER	6-0	420	54	33	Atlanta, GA	Larry Shreeve
JOEL DEATON	6-2	238	33	7	Charlotte, NC	Joseph Jones
HARUKA EIGEN	5-7½	240	44	24	Ishikawa, Japan	Haruka Eigen
MASA FUCHI	5-10	218	36	17	Kitakyushu, Japan	Masanobu Fuchi
BOBBY FULTON	5-8	210	29	14	Charlotte, NC	James Hines
DORY FUNK	6-2	215	48	26	Dundellon, FL	Dorrance Funk, Jr.
TERRY FUNK	6-1	218	46	24	Canyon, TX	Terry Funk
DOUG FURNAS	5-9	260	29	4	Knoxville, TN	Doug Furnas
TERRY GORDY	6-4	290	29	15	Chattanooga, TN	Terry Gordy
STAN HANSEN	6-2½	290	41	18	Jackson, TN	John Hansen
MIGHTY INOUE	5-6	205	41	23	Osaka, Japan	Sueo Inoue
TOSHIAKI KAWADA	5-9½	229	27	9	Tichigi, Japan	Toshiaki Kawada
DYNAMITE KID	5-8	175	32	17	Calgary, Alberta	Thomas Billington
TSUYOSHI KIKUCHI	5-7	195	26	3	Tokyo, Japan	Tsuyoshi Kikuchi
GIANT KIMALA II	6-0	335	26	4	Atlanta, GA	Benjamin Peacock
RUSHER KIMURA	5-11	245	49	26	Hokkaido, Japan	Masao Kimura
KENTA KOBASHI	6-1½	237	23	3	Tokyo, Japan	Kenta Kobashi
DAN KROFFAT	5-11	225	30	8	Montreal, Québec	Phil Lafond
DEAN MALENKO	5-8½	190	30	9	Tampa, FL	Dean Simon
JOE MALENKO	5-10	213	34	13	Tampa, FL	Joseph Simon
MITSUHARU MISAWA	5-11	228	28	10	Saitama, Japan	Mitsuharu Misawa
MITSUO MOMOTA	5-8	200	42	20	Osaka, Japan	Mitsuo Momota, Jr.
YOSHINARI OGAWA	5-8½	190	24	5	Tichigi, Japan	Yoshinari Ogawa
MOTOSHI OKUMA	5-8	245	49	29	Soka, Japan	Motoshi Okuma
TOMMY ROGERS	5-8	190	29	10	St. Petersburg, FL	Thomas Couch
TIGER JEET SINGH	6-0	248	47	26	Toronto, Ontario	Daro Singh, Jr.
RICHARD SLINGER	5-4	175	19	1	Chattanooga, TN	Richard Acelinger
JOHNNY SMITH	5-10	237	25	5	Calgary, Alberta	
DANNY SPIVEY	6-7	290	39	7	Tampa, FL	Dan Spivey
AKIRA TAUE	6-3	239	29	3	Tokyo, Japan	Akira Taue
ISAMU TERANISHI	5-7	198	44	20	Toyama, Japan	Isamu Teranishi
JUMBO TSURUTA	6-4	272	39	18	Yamanishi, Japan	Tomomi Tsuruta
STEVE WILLIAMS	6-1	285	32	9	Benton, LA	Steve Williams

NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING

BADNEWS ALLEN	6-0	265	48	13	Calgary, Alberta	Allen Coage
VLADIMIR BERKOVICH	6-2	250	31	2	USSR	Vladimir Berkovich
BAM BAM BIGELOW	6-2	405	29	5	Asbury Park, NJ	Scott Bigelow
BLACK CAT	5-9	218	36	10	Mexico City	
MASA CHONO	5-11	229	27	6	Tokyo, Japan	Masahiro Chono
RIKI CHOSHU	5-10	238	39	17	Tokuyama, Japan	Mitsuo Yoshida
TATSUMI FUJINAMI	5-9	238	37	19	Masashi, Japan	Tatsumi Fujinami
TATSUTOSHI GOTO	5-10	227	34	18	Aichi, Japan	Tatsutoshi Goto
ANIMAL HAMAGUCHI	5-7	208	43	20	Shimane, Japan	Higo Hamaguchi
OWEN HART	5-10	226	25	5	Calgary, Alberta	Owen Hart
HIROSHI HASE	5-11	225	29	5	Yokohama, Japan	Hiroshi Hase

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
SALMAN HASHIMIKOV	5-10½	270	37	2	USSR	Salman Hashimikov
SHINYA HASHIMOTO	5-9	268	25	6	Gifu, Japan	Shinya Hashimoto
NORIO HONAGA	5-8½	200	34	11	Tokyo, Japan	Nobuo Honaga
KANTARO HOSHINO	5-4	165	47	30	Kobe, Japan	Kantaro Hoshino
TAKAYUKI IIZUKA	5-10	203	24	4	Niigata, Japan	Takahiro Iizuka
PEGASUS KID	5-9	218	23	5	Edmonton, Alberta	Chris Benoit
OSAMU KIDO	5-8	205	40	22	Kawasaki, Japan	Osamu Kido
KENGO KIMURA	6-0	230	37	19	Ehime, Japan	Takashi Kimura
KUNIAKI KOBAYASHI	5-10	223	34	17	Nagano, Japan	Kuniaki Kobayashi
SHIRO KOSHINAKA	5-10	217	32	12	Tokyo, Japan	Shiro Koshinaka
MASANOBU KURISU	5-7	208	44	18	Kagoshima, Japan	Masanobu Kurisu
SUPER STRONG MACHINE	6-0	249	34	13	Kanagawa, Japan	Junji Hirata
OSAMU MATSUDA	5-10	185	24	4		Osamu Matsuda
TAKESHI MISAWA	5-8	210	21	1		Takeshi Misawa
KEIJI MUTO	6-2	232	28	6	Tokyo, Japan	Keiji Muto
MICHYOSHI OHARA	5-7	190	23	1		Michyoshi Ohara
BRAD RHEINGANS	5-9	238	37	10	Minneapolis, MN	Brad Rheingans
JUSHIN RIGER	5-4½	197	26	7	Hiroshima, Japan	Keiichi Yamada
HIRO SAITO	5-8	229	29	13	Kawasaki, Japan	Hiroyuki Saito
MASA SAITO	5-11	250	48	24	Tokyo, Japan	Masanori Saito
KENSUKE SASAKI	5-10	233	24	5	Tokyo, Japan	Kensuke Sasaki
SOUL TAKER	6-5½	315	29	2	San Jose, CA	Charles Wright
BIG VAN VADER	6-3	390	34	5	Boulder, CO	Leon White
VICTOR ZANGIEV	5-11	228	29	2	USSR	Victor Zangiev
CHIMUR ZARASOV	6-1	219	27	2	USSR	Chimur Zarasov

UNIVERSAL WRESTLING FEDERATION

YOJI ANJYO	5-10	195	23	5	Tokyo, Japan	Yoji Anjyo
YOSHIAKI FUJIWARA	5-11	223	41	18	Iwate, Japan	Yoshiaki Fujiwara
YUSUKE FUKE	5-7½	170	21	1		Yusuke Fuke
MASAHIRO FUNAKI	6-0	234	21	6	Aomori, Japan	Masahiro Funaki
MASATO KAKIHARA	5-8	170	23	1		Masato Kakihara
AKIRA MAEDA	6-3	243	31	13	Osaka, Japan	Akira Maeda
SHIGEO MIYATO	5-8	185	27	5	Tokyo, Japan	Shigeo Miyato
TATSUO NAKANO	5-7	218	25	5	Ibaragi, Japan	Tatsuo Nakano
MINORU SUZUKI	5-9	205	22	3	Tokyo, Japan	Minoru Suzuki
NOBUHIKO TAKADA	5-11	231	28	10	Yokohama, Japan	Nobuhiko Takada
KIYOSHI TAMURA	5-8	185	21	1		Kiyoshi Tamura
KAZUO YAMAZAKI	5-11	225	28	9	Tokyo, Japan	Kazuo Yamazaki

SUPER WORLD SPORTS

DON ARAKAWA	5-7	205	44	18	Kagoshima, Japan	Makoto Arakawa
SAMSON FUYUKI	5-9	250	30	11	Tokyo, Japan	Masamichi Fuyuki
TAKASHI ISHIKAWA	5-9½	237	37	12	Yamagata, Japan	Takashi Ishikawa
GREAT KABUKI	5-10	232	42	26	Miyazaki, Japan	Akihisa Yomera
AKIRA KATAYAMA	5-7	190	26	5	Okayama, Japan	Akira Katayama
TATSUMI KITAHARA	5-8	210	26	3	Tokyo, Japan	Tatsumi Kitahara
KOJI KITAO	6-5	310	26	1	Yokohama, Japan	Koji Kitao
KENDO NAGASAKI	6-0	238	42	20	Dallas, TX	Kazuo Sakurada
SHINICHI NAKANO	5-9	205	27	10	Niigata, Japan	Shinichi Nakano
FUMIHIRO NIIKURA	5-10½	225	33	8	Tokyo, Japan	Fumihiro Niikura
KENICHI OOYA	5-8	205	26	4	Ishikawa, Japan	Kenichi Ooya
MASAO ORIHARA	5-7½	175	21	1		Masao Orihara
NAOKI SANO	5-9	205	25	7	Hokkaido, Japan	Naoki Sano

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
APOLLO SUGAWARA	5-9	205	36	11	Akita, Japan	Nuboyashi Sugawara
ISAO TAKAGI	5-11	253	29	4	Tokyo, Japan	Isao Takagi
GEORGE TAKANO	6-0	239	32	14	Iwakuni, Japan	Gyoji Takano
SHUNJI TAKANO	6-5	283	26	9	Iwakuni, Japan	Howard Dent
GENICHIRO TENRYU	6-1	253	40	14	Katsuyama, Japan	Genichiro Shimade
GORO TSURUMI	5-11	260	42	20	Yokohama, Japan	Takao Tanaka
YOSHIAKI YATSU	6-0	260	34	10	Gunma, Japan	Yoshiaki Yatsu

UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

TONY ANTHONY	6-0	248	30	13		Tony Anthony
STEVE AUSTIN	6-2	248	26	1	Denton, TX	Steve Williams
CHRIS CHAMPION	5-11	213	30	7	Tampa, FL	David Ashford-Smith
KING COBRA	6-0	234	39	14	Memphis, TN	Jimmy Kimble
STEPHEN DANE	5-10	227	26	5	San Antonio, TX	Stephen Dane
DANNY DAVIS	5-6	185		13	Nashville, TN	
MIKE DAVIS	6-0	215	34	13	Dallas, TX	
BILL DUNDEE	5-5	208	47	19	Nashville, TN	William Crookshanks
JAMIE DUNDEE	5-8	180	19	1	Nashville, TN	Jamie Crookshanks
ERIC EMBRY	5-9	245	33	11	Dallas, TX	Doug Embry
SHEIK FABBIANO	6-0	255	27	5	Brooklyn, NY	Lou Fabbiano
JEFF GAYLORD	6-3	245	32	5	Kansas City, MO	Jeff Gaylord
DOUG GILBERT	6-0	253	21	4	Lexington, TN	Doug Gilbert
JEFF JARRETT	5-10½	208	23	5	Hendersonville, TN	Jeff Jarrett
JERRY LAWLER	5-10	215	41	20	Memphis, TN	Jerry Lawler
BRIAN LEE	6-4	240	24	3	Orlando, FL	Brian Harris
JOSEPH MAGLIANO	5-7	200	28	3	Baltimore, MD	Joseph Magliano
ALAN MARTIN	5-9½	208		7	Dallas, TX	Alan Martin
CODY MICHAELS	5-9	205	26	1	Pittsburgh, PA	Mark Keenan
CALIFORNIA STUD	6-0	285	26	1	San Diego, CA	Rodney Price
JOHN TATUM	6-2	230	31	8	Dallas, TX	John Frenkel
BILLY JOE TRAVIS	5-10	208	28	10	Lexington, KY	Billy Travis
KEN WAYNE	5-6	195		13	Nashville, TN	Kenneth Peale
GARY YOUNG	6-0	238	39	13	Little Rock, AR	Gary Herrington

NORTH AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS

CHRIS ADAMS	6-0	232	35	13	Irving, TX	Chris Adams
BRIAN ADIAS	6-0	215	30	8	Lake Dallas, TX	Brian Gower
GARY ALLBRIGHT	6-4	310	27	3	Billings, MT	Gary Allbright
BRAD ANDERSON	5-11	220	22	3	Charlotte, NC	Brad Anderson
SCOTT ARMSTRONG	5-10	185	31	7	Marietta, GA	Scott Armstrong
JIMMY BACKLUND	5-11	210	28	5	Tampa, FL	Jimmy Backlund
B. BRIAN BLAIR	5-10	228	37	17	Tampa, FL	Brian Blair
WAYNE BLOOM	6-3	255	33	2	Minneapolis, MN	Wayne Bloom
SCOTTY THE BODY	5-10½	220	27	4	Milwaukee, OR	Scott Levy
MATT BORNE	5-10	240	33	12	Dallas, TX	Matthew Osborne
KILLER TIM BROOKS	6-0	280	46	23	Wakahachie, TX	Timothy Brooks
BULLDOG BOB BROWN	5-10	245	51	32	Winnipeg, MB	Robert Green
BRICKHOUSE BROWN	5-8	200		8	Miami, FL	Fredrick Seawright
LARRY CAMERON	6-1½	260	38	3	Minneapolis, MN	Larry Cameron
WENDELL COOLEY	5-10	220	29	8	Milton, FL	Wendell Cooley
STEVE COX	6-0	235	29	4	Tulsa, OK	Steve Cox
ANGEL OF DEATH	6-5½	270	35	5	Anaheim, CA	David Sheldon
COLONEL ED DEBEERS	6-4	270	47	20	Vancouver, WA	William Edward Wiskoski
DEMOLITION AX	6-2	278		19	Atlanta, GA	William Eadie

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
ABBUDA DEIN	5-10	228	28	7	Honolulu, HI	Rocky Iaukea
STEVE DISALVO	5-10	290	35	5	Calgary, Alberta	Steve DiSalvo
STEVE DOLL	5-11½	233	26	6	Portland, OR	Steve Doll
DERRICK DUKES	6-1	230	26	3	Minneapolis, MN	Derrick Dukes
MIKE ENOS	6-1	260	28	2	Minneapolis, MN	Mike Enos
THE EQUALIZER	6-3	268	27	1	Omaha, NE	Bill Dannenhauser
MANNY FERNANDEZ	6-0	250	36	12	San Jose, CA	Manuel Fernandez
ROBERT FULLER	6-4	248	39	20	Dyresburg, TN	Robert Welch
JACKIE FULTON	5-11	225	22	2	Chillicothe, OH	George Hines
JIMMY JACK FUNK	6-0	252	30	11	Portland, OR	Ferrin Barr
ONE MAN GANG	6-6	420	30	12	North Carolina	George Gray
RON GARVIN	5-10	218	47	28	Charlotte, NC	Roger Barnes
TERRENCE GARVIN	5-7	200	30	3	Dallas, TX	Terry Sims
THE GENIUS	6-0	245	36	17	Tampa, FL	Lanny Poffo
EDDIE GILBERT	5-9	210	29	12	Memphis, TN	Thomas Edward Gilbert, Jr.
MIKE GOLDEN	6-0	235	32	10	Shawnee, OK	Michael Golden
THE GRAPPLER	5-10	245		12	Portland, OR	Edward Lynn Denton
JERRY GREY	5-11	238	27	10	Orlando, FL	Jerry Grey
CHAVO GUERRERO	5-8	213	40	17	Los Angeles, CA	Salvador Guerrero, Jr.
BILLY JACK HAYNES	6-2	260	37	8	Portland, OR	William Haynes, Jr.
JONATHAN HOLIDAY	5-9	227	25	3	Camden, NJ	Jonathan Holiday
HONKEYTONK MAN	6-1	248	37	13	Bolivar, TN	Roy Wayne Ferris
SAM HOUSTON	6-3	228	26	8	Charlotte, NC	Michael Smith
AUSTIN IDOL	6-0	235	39	19	Pensacola, FL	Dennis McCord
CACTUS JACK	6-2	258	26	3	Setauket, NY	Michael Foley
PAUL JONES	5-9	225	47	26	Charlotte, NC	Paul Fredrick
S. D. JONES	6-1	258	45	28	Philadelphia, PA	Conrad Efrain
THE JUICER	5-8	190	23	4	Portland, OR	Arthur Barr
COUSIN JUNIOR	6-1	295	31	8	Jamestown, KY	Lanny Kean
STEVE KEIRN	6-0	230	39	17	Tampa, FL	Steve Keirn
CHEETAH KID	5-9	210	37	9	Middlesex, NJ	Ted Petty
KIMALA	6-4½	335	40	16	San Antonio, TX	James Harris
REX KING	5-11	200	27	4	Tampa, FL	Mark Smith
IVAN KOLOFF	5-9	240	54	29	Charlotte, NC	James Parris
NIKITA KOLOFF	6-2	245	31	7	Concord, NC	Steve Simpson
FRANKIE LANCASTER	6-1	239	30	8	Tampa, FL	Frank Lancaster
STAN LANE	6-0	235	37	13	Charlotte, NC	Stan Lane
AL MADRIL	6-0	235	39	19	Portland, OR	Alberto Madril
WAHOO McDANIEL	6-0	270	52	28	Charlotte, NC	Edward McDaniel
MOONDOG MORETTI	5-9	260	33	16	Canby, OR	Edward Giovannetti
MOONDOG SPOT	5-10	275	38	16	Chattanooga, TN	Larry Booker
RIP MORGAN	6-4½	270	33	7	Auckland, NZ	
JERRY MORROW	6-0	239	41	20	Calgary, Alberta	Gerard Ethefer
DON MURACO	6-2	280	42	21	Honolulu, HI	Don Muraco
DICK MURDOCH	6-3	280	45	26	Canyon, TX	Richard Murdoch
YUKON JOHN NORD	6-6	279	31	6	Anoka, MN	John Nord
SCOTT NORTON	6-2	330	28	2	Minneapolis, MN	Scott Norton
BARRY O	6-1	230	31	11	Las Vegas, NV	Randall Barry Orton
LARRY OLIVER	6-2	260	19	1	Portland, OR	Larry Oliver, Jr.
RIP OLIVER	6-0	245	38	15	Portland, OR	Larry Oliver, Sr.
PAUL ORNDORFF	5-11	205	41	14	Fayetteville, GA	Paul Orndorff
BOB ORTON	6-3	260	40	20	St. Louis, MO	Robert Orton, Jr.

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
ICEMAN KING PARSONS	5-9	230	41	11	Dallas, TX	King Parsons
KEN PATERA	6-0	265	48	16	Minneapolis, MN	Kenneth Patera
AL PEREZ	6-1	239	30	9	Tampa, FL	Alex Perez
DARRYL PETERSON	6-5	310	28	4	Salt Lake City, UT	Darryl Peterson
TOM PRICHARD	5-9	218	31	12	Houston, TX	Tom Prichard
IVAN PUTSKI	5-6	225	49	19	Houston, TX	Joseph Bednarski
STEVE REGAL	6-0	205	35	13	Indianapolis, IN	Steve Regal
RICKY RICE	6-1	225	27	4	Edina, MN	Ricky Rice
GOLDIE ROGERS	5-10	200	40	18	Coburg, Ontario	David Sherwin
RANDY ROSE	6-1	230	39	16	Atlanta, GA	Randy Alls
RANGER ROSS	6-1½	225	30	4	Acworth, GA	
RAYMOND ROUGEAU	6-0	233	35	19	Montreal, Québec	Raymond Rougeau
RICK RUDE	6-4	235	32	7	Minneapolis, MN	Richard Rood
DAVID SAMMARTINO	5-8	172	31	12	Atlanta, GA	David Sammartino
WILD SAMOAN FATU	6-0	295	24	5	San Francisco, CA	Solofa Fatu
WILD SAMOAN KOKINA	6-3	425	24	6	San Francisco, CA	Rodney Anoia
WILD SAMOAN SAMU	6-3	290	27	9	San Francisco, CA	Samula Anoia
WILD SAMOAN SAVAGE	6-0	280	25	7	San Francisco, CA	Sam Fatu
RICKY SANTANA	5-10	228	29	8	Miami, FL	Aldo Ortiz
JOE SAVOLDI	5-9	210	33	10	Parsippany, NJ	Robert Forini
BRETT SAWYER	5-5	210	30	10	Sacramento, CA	Brett Woyan
BUZZ SAWYER	5-9	263	31	12	Sacramento, CA	Bruce Woyan
SCHAUN SIMPSON	5-9	195	24	4	Dallas, TX	Schaun Cohen
STEVE SIMPSON	6-0	205	27	7	Dallas, TX	Steven Cohen
DICK SLATER	6-0	238	38	19	Tampa, FL	Van Richard Slater
NORMAN SMILEY	6-0	218	25	6	Miami Beach, FL	Norman Smiley
NIGHT STALKER	6-7	295	25	1	Kansas City, MO	Bryan Clark
ITALIAN STALLION	5-11	255	33	8	Roanoke, VA	Gary Saghi
MARK STARR	6-2	230	26	5	Tampa, FL	Mark Ashford-Smith
RAY STEVENS	5-9	255	56	41	Fairfield, MT	Carl Raymond Stevens
J. W. STORM	6-4½	270	26	2	Minneapolis, MN	Jeff Warner
ADRIAN STREET	5-6	220	49	29	Pensacola, FL	Adrian Street
THE TERMINATOR	6-1	255	26	4	Tampa, FL	Marc Laurinidas
THE WILD THING	6-2	265	24	3	Kansas City, MO	Steve Ray
CURTIS THOMPSON	6-0½	238	31	3	Charlotte, NC	Curtis Thompson
COWBOY TONY	5-11	243	29	16	Dallas, TX	Anthony Felker
THE TROOPER	6-2	262	25	3	Buford, SC	Del Wilkes
JIMMY VALIANT	6-1	195	48	22	Charlotte, NC	James Valen
JACKO VICTORY	6-3	278	28	6	New Jersey	Ken Rinehurst
NIKOLAI VOLKOFF	6-3	303	43	23	Silver Springs, MD	Josip Peruzovic
CHRIS VON ERICH	5-4	160	21	1	Tyler, TX	Chris Adkisson
KEVIN VON ERICH	6-2	220	33	15	Lake Dallas, TX	Kevin Adkisson
BIFF WELLINGTON	5-11	220	26	4	Lethbridge, Alberta	Shane Bower
PEZ WHATLEY	5-9	245	39	17	Chattanooga, TN	Pez Whatley
SKIP YOUNG	5-9	225	33	14	Fort Worth, TX	Galton Young
BUCK ZUMHOFER	5-9½	208	35	15	Hamburg, MN	Herman Zumhofe

LUCHA LIBRE

PERRO AGUAYO	5-8	195	44	21	Mexico City	Pedro Damian Aguayo
YOSHIHIRO ASAI	5-8	175	24	4	Tokyo, Japan	Yoshihiro Asai
SUPER ASTRO	5-0	168	29	8	Mexico City	Juan Castiglano
ATLANTIS	5-7	170	28	8	Mexico City	Benito Juarez
ANGEL AZTECA	5-7	165	28	7		

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
HOMBRE BALA	5-8	205	38	21	Mexico	
BLACKMAN	5-6	165	37	14	Mexico	Alvaro Mendez
FABULOSO BLONDY	5-10	239	39	11	Atlanta, GA	Ken Timbs
EL BRAZO	5-5	210	29	13	Mexico City	Juan Alvarado Nieves
BRAZO DE ORO	5-5	195	30	14	Mexico City	Jose Alvarado Nieves
BRAZO DE PLATA	5-5	285	28	13	Mexico City	Jesus Alvarado Nieves
CANEK	6-0	235	38	18	Mexico City	S. Estrada
CIEN CARAS	5-11	198	33	11	Mexico	Carselo Reyes Gonzales
DOS CARAS	5-10	215	39	20	Mexico City	Miguel Jose Rodriguez
CANELO CASAS	5-7	155	20	3	Mexico City	Erick Casas
NEGRO CASAS	5-7	165	29	11	Mexico City	Jose Ruiz Casas
EMILIO CHARLES JR.	5-7	180	34	11	Mexico City	Sergio Emilio Charles, Jr.
SANGRE CHICANA	5-9	185	39	19	Mexico City	Andres Richardson
JAVIER CRUZ	5-6	155	32	11	Mexico	Pedro Santacruz
UCHILLO	5-7	175	42		Mexico	
EL DANDY	5-4	155	28	10	Mexico City	Roberto Gutierrez Frias
APOLLO DANTES	5-11	205	22	2	Mexico	Alfonso Dantes, Jr.
CESAR DANTES	5-8	178	20	2		Cesar Dantes
BLUE DEMON JR.	5-7	175	24	7	Mexico	Luis Rabadan
MASCARA ANO DOS MIL	5-8	190	32	10	Mexico	
UNIVERSO DOS MIL	5-11	180	27	6	Mexico	
EL ESPANTO JR.	5-6	155	34	8	Mexico	
JERRY ESTRADA	5-9	170	32	13	Mexico	
EL FARAOON	5-10	180	43	18	Mexico City	Jose Luis Barajas Fernandez
JOSE LUIS FELICIANO	5-9	180	35	13	Mexico	Jose Luis Feliciano
LA FIERA	5-8	175	29	13	Mexico	Alfredo Casco
FISHMAN	5-7	180	39	21	Mexico	
KUNG FU	5-2	165	39	17	Mexico	Reymundo Acosta
EL HIJO DEL GLADIADOR	5-6	150			Mexico	Luis Ramirez Jr.
SOLOMON GRUNDY	5-10	385	25	3	Dallas, TX	
FUERZA GUERRERA	5-5	155	36	10	Mexico City	
EDDIE GUERRERO	5-7	195	22	4	El Paso, Texas	Eddie Guerrero
MANDO GUERRERO	5-6	195	38	16	Los Angeles, CA	Armando Guerrero
SHU EL GUERRERO	5-6	170	27	9	Mexico City	
EL GRAN HAMADA	5-5	185	40	19	Tokyo, Japan	Hiroaki Hamada
EL RAYO DE JALISCO JR.	6-1	215	30	14	Guadalajara, Mexico	Max Linares, Jr.
KENDO	5-6	160	34	16	Mexico	
THE KILLER	5-11½	218	37	12		Andy Barrow
SILVER KING	5-6½	160	23	5	Mexico City	Miguel Gonzales
KATO KUNG LEE	5-6½	170	42	24	Panama	Johnny Rescana
LIZMARK	5-7	170	40	15	Acapulco, Mexico	Juan Banos
JAVIER LLANES	5-7	155	38		Mexico	Javier Llanes
MASAKRE	5-8	200	35	8	Mexico	Radames Coco
MIL MASCARAS	5-10	225	52	26	Mexico City	Aaron Rodriguez
JAQUE MATE	5-8	165	30		Mexico	
CACHORRO MENDOZA	5-7	180	35	17	Mexico City	Pedro Jacobo Gutierrez Contreras
RINGO MENDOZA	5-8	180	41	23	Mexico City	Genoro Jacobo Gutierrez Contreras
MOGUR	5-7	170	36	11		
PIRATA MORGAN	5-8	205	28	11	Mexico	Pedro Ortiz Villanueva
MS 1	5-8	190	33	9	Mexico	Pablo Fuentes
NEGRO NAVARRO	5-10	205	35	16	Mexico	Miguel Navarro

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
OCTAGON	5-5	165	29	2	Mexico City	
ASTRO DE ORO	5-10	200	30	6	Guatemala	
BLUE PANTHER	5-7	160	30	13	Mexico	
PIERROT JR.	5-8	185	32	14	Mexico	
BLACK POWER	5-6	190		20	Mexico	Johnny Vanelli Guzman
EL HIJO DEL SANTO	5-3	150	27	8	Mexico	Rudolfo Guzman Huerta, Jr.
EL SATANICO	5-8	175	41	17	Mexico	Daniel Lopez
SCORPIO	5-8	215	45	16	Mexico	
EL SIGNO	5-7	235	37	15	Mexico	
SOLAR I	5-8	175	35	16	Mexico	
TAMBA THE FLYING ELEPHANT	5-8	260	40	16	Mexico	Francisco Arreola
BLACK TERRY	5-6	165		15		
EL TEXANO	5-8	205	32	16	Mexico	
FRAY TORMENTA	5-2	155	37	13	San Juan, Mexico	Sergio Gutierrez Benitez
ENRIQUE VERA	5-10	205	43	23	Mexico City	Enrique Vera
EL VERDUGO	5-8	220	26	7	Mexico	Francisco Javier Ortiz Villaneuva
VILLANO I	5-6	180	44	22	Mexico City	Ray Mendoza, Jr.
VILLANO III	5-7	185	38	20	Mexico City	Arturo Mendoza
VILLANO IV	5-7	178	25	11	Mexico City	Tomas Diaz
VILLANO V	5-7	172	28	15	Mexico City	
DR. WAGNER JR.	5-10	205			Mexico City	Manuel Gonzales, Jr.

EUROPE

STEPHEN CASEY	6-4½	242	27	10	London, England	Stephen Casey
SCOTT HALL	6-5	275	31	7	Orlando, FL	Scott Hall
AKIRA NOGAMI	5-10	190	24	5	Yokohama, Japan	Akira Nogami
PETE ROBERTS	6-1	222	48	32	London, England	Peter Roberts
MARK ROCCO	5-8	190	39	19	London, England	Mark Hussey
TONY ST. CLAIR	6-1	210	40	23	London, England	Tony St. Clair
OTTO WANZ	6-2½	440	48	22	Graz, Austria	Otto Wanz
STEVE WRIGHT	5-11	195	43	22	England	Stephen Wright

PUERTO RICO

CUBAN ASSASSIN	5-5	220	45	20	Cuba	Angel Acevedo
HURRICANE CASTILLO JR.	5-8½	208	25	5	San Juan, PR	Daniel Castillo, Jr.
CARLITOS COLON	5-9	215	45	25	San Juan, PR	Carlitos Colon
KIM DUK	6-3	275	42	23	Portland, OR	Masanori Toguchi
LANCE IDOL	6-0	239	32	13	Stockton, CA	Steve Schumann
INVADER #1	5-9½	210	44	21	Ponce, PR	Jose Huertas Gonzales
INVADER #4	5-8	195	23	3	Ponce, PR	Maelo Huertas
BUTCH MASTERS	6-8	276	27	2	St. Joseph, MO	
SUPER MEDICO	5-10	230	44	16	New York, NY	Carlos Estrada
SKYWALKER NITRON	6-7½	295	25	3		Darryl Karolet
MIGUELITO PEREZ	6-1	250	27	5	San Juan, PR	Jose Perez, Jr.
RON STARR	5-11	235	40	22	Atlanta, GA	Robert Eugene Nutt
VIC STEAMBOAT	5-10	210	29	5	Tampa, FL	Victor Blood
TNT	6-0	235	25	6	San Juan, PR	Juan Rivera

JAPANESE INDEPENDENTS

MASASHI AOYAGI	5-4	180	34	2	Pioneer	Masashi Aoyagi
SAMBO ASAKO	5-9	350	27	1	FMW	Fumihiro Asako
RICKY FUJI	5-8½	200	25	3	FMW	Masanobu Morimura
RYUMA GO	5-9½	237	34	19	Pioneer	Hiroshi Yagi
TARZAN GOTO	5-9	253	27	10	FMW	Munenori Goto
AKIHITO ICHIHARA	5-8	170	21	1	FMW	Akihito Ichihara

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
BULLDOG K.T.	5-7	210	21	1	Universal	
MASA MICHINOKU	5-8	175	21	1	Universal	
MASAOMI MORISHIGE	5-9	165	22	1	FMW	Masaomi Morishige
ATSUSHI ONITA	5-9½	218	33	14	FMW	Atsushi Onita
MR. POGO	5-11	245	39	19	FMW	Tetsuo Sekigawa
SAMURAI	5-9	215	25	7	U.S. independents	Shinji Sasazaki
LEE GAK SOO	5-6	160	29	1	FMW	Lee Gak Soo
COOLIE S.Z.	5-8	195	22	1	Universal	
MASAHIKO TAKASUGI	5-7½	207	35	14	Pioneer	Masaヒコ Takasugi
KATSUJI UEDA	5-8½	195	45	1	FMW	Katsuji Ueda
YUKIHIDE UENA	5-7	160	25	1	FMW	Yukihide Ueno
MONKEY MAGIC WAKITA	5-7	175	23	1	Universal	

WOMEN WRESTLERS

MISS A	5-8	166	21	5	JWP	
BAMBI					LPWA	
MISTY BLUE	5-7	125			LPWA	Diane Simms
HYPER CAT	5-2	120	23	8	All Japan Women	Yumi Ogura
LA DIABOLICA			25		Mexico	
CANDI DIVINE	5-7	135	30	10	LPWA	Candace Rummell
LOLA GONZALES	5-7	140	30	13	Mexico	Lola Gonzales
XOCHI HAMADA	5-4	120	20	5	Mexico	Xochi Hamada
AKIRA HOKUTO	5-6	122	23	6	All Japan Women	Hisako Uno
YUMIKO HOTTA	5-5	155	23	6	All Japan Women	Yumiko Hotta
ANIMAL INOUE	5-4	145	21	3	All Japan Women	Kyoko Inoue
GRIZZLY IWAMOTO	5-3½	138	22	6	All Japan Women	Kumiko Iwamoto
LEILANI KAI	5-7	180		16	LPWA	Patricia Karisma
SHINOBU KANDORI	5-5	135	26	5	JWP	Shinobu Kandori
RUMI KAZAMA	4-11	115	25	5	JWP	Rumie Saito
BISON KIMURA	5-7	145	23	5	All Japan Women	Nobuko Kimura
AJA KONG	5-4	200	20	5	All Japan Women	Erica Shishedo
PEGGY LEE LEATHER	5-6	170			LPWA	
MADUSA	5-9½	155	27	5	All Japan Women	Debra Ann Miceli
KAORU MAEDA	5-4	124	21	5	All Japan Women	Kaoru Maeda
PLUM MARIKO	5-2	115	23	5	JWP	Mariko Umeda
JUDY MARTIN	5-7	180			LPWA	Judy Hardee
DEVIL MASAMI	5-6	175	29	13	JWP	Tenjin Masami
MAGNIFICENT MIMI	5-7	128	25	2	LPWA	Mimi Lessos
SUZUKA MINAMI	5-7	145	21	7	All Japan Women	Mika Suzuki
ETSUKO MITA	5-6	120	21	4	All Japan Women	Etsuko Mita
ESTELLE MORENO	4-10	120	21	5	Mexico	Estelle Moreno
ROSSY MORENO	5-4	130	27	13	Mexico	Maria del Rocio Moreno Leon
BULL NAKANO	5-6	210	22	8	All Japan Women	
OSCAR	5-4	135	24	5	JWP	Tomoko Tsuchiya
MAYUMI OZAKI	5-1	110	22	5	JWP	Mayumi Ozaki
WENDI RICHTER	5-7	135	30	13		Wendi Richter
ROCKIN ROBIN	5-7	120	25	3		Robin Smith
EAGLE SAWAI	5-4	134	23	5	JWP	Tomoko Sawai
HARLEY SAITO	5-4	135	23	5	JWP	Sayori Saito
SUSAN SEXTON	5-7	144			LPWA	Susan Sexton
MIMA SHIMODA	5-4	125	20	4	All Japan Women	Mima Shimoda
RHONDA SINGH	5-6	190	29	9		
LA SIRENITA	5-2	120	29	8	Mexico	Maria de la Luz Pena

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
PANTERA SURENA	5-6	155	38	16	Mexico	Juana Machetes
CUTIE SUZUKI	5-0	105	21	5	JWP	Yumi Suzuki
MIKA TAKAHASHI	5-4	129	21	5	All Japan Women	Mika Takahashi
NORIYO TATENO	5-3	135	25	10	All Japan Women	Noriyo Tateno
COMBAT TOYOTA	5-5	155	23		FMW	
MANAMI TOYOTA	5-5	135	19	4	All Japan Women	Manami Toyota
LUNA VACHON	5-2	120	28	6	MLW	Gertrude Vachon
TOSHIYO YAMADA	5-5	135	20	4	All Japan Women	Toshinori Yamada
ITZUKI YAMAZAKI	5-4	128	25	10	JWP	Itzuki Yamazaki
BAT YOSHINAGA	5-1	145	20	2	All Japan Women	Eriko Yoshinaga

MANAGERS AND VALETS

GENERAL ADNON (WWF)	5-10	245	58	31	Minneapolis, MN	Adnon Kaisy
SCANDOR AKBAR	5-8	248	54	34	Vernon, TX	Jim Wehba
DOWNTOWN BRUNO (USWA)	5-7	130	27	6	Pittsburgh, PA	Bruno Lauer
JIM CORNETTE	6-0	248	29	8	Charlotte, NC	James Cornette
PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY (NWA)	5-10	185	25	4	Scarsdale, NY	Paul Heyman
BABY DOLL	6-0	155	28	7	Charlotte, NC	Nickla Roberts-Smith
ELIZABETH (WWF)	5-4	100	30	6	Tampa, FL	Elizabeth Heulette-Poffo
MR. FUJI (WWF)	5-11	280	54	31	Honolulu, HI	Harry Fujiwara
GOBBLEDY GOOKER (WWF)	5-11	185	33	13	Nashville, TN	Hector Guerrero
JIMMY HART (WWF)	6-0	160	47	12	Memphis, TN	Jimmy Hart
BOBBY HEENAN (WWF)	6-0	245	47	24	Tampa, FL	Raymond Louis Heenan
MISSY HYATT (NWA)	5-8	125	27	6	Atlanta, GA	Melissa Ann Hiatt
TEDDY LONG (NWA)	5-11	215		2	Atlanta, GA	Theodore Long
BROTHER LOVE (WWF)	6-0	245	28	3	Houston, TX	Bruce Prichard
PERCY PRINGLE	5-10	245	36	15	Dallas, TX	William Moody
SAPPHIRE (WWF)	5-2	210	52	2	St. Louis, MO	Juanita Wright
QUEEN SENSATIONAL SHERRI (WWF)	5-7	140	32	8	New Orleans, LA	Sherry Russell
SLICK (WWF)	6-4	170		5	Fort Worth, TX	Ken Johnson
VIRGIL (WWF)	5-11	233	28	5	Washington, DC	Michael Jones
SHOGUN K.Y. WAKAMATSU	5-10	205	48	18	Hokkaido, Japan	Ichimasa Wakamatsu
TOJO YAMAMOTO (USWA)	5-3	195	63	38	Nashville, TN	Harold Wantanabe
DIRTY WHITE GIRL (USWA)	5-3	105	22	4		Kimberly Wolser-Anthony
WOMAN	5-4	125		5	Daytona Beach, FL	Nancy Daus
ABDUL WIZAL	5-1	125		3	Calgary, Alberta	Mohad Zein

BIG NAMES OF THE NOT TOO DISTANT PAST

ADRIAN ADONIS	6-0	265	1954-1988	1974-1988	Bakersfield, CA	Keith Franke
OLE ANDERSON	6-0	245	48	1966-1990	Atlanta, GA	Alan Rogowski
SPYROS ARION	6-2	245	50	1961-1982		
BOB ARMSTRONG	5-11	220	53	1967-1990	Marietta, GA	Robert James, Sr.
BOB BACKLUND	6-1	225	40	1973-1989	Glastonbury, CT	Robert Backlund
RED BASTIEN	5-9	220	59	1952-1979	Anaheim, CA	Roland Bastien
CRUSHER JERRY BLACKWELL	5-10	420	41	1974-1988	Stone Mountain, GA	Jerry Blackwell
TULLY BLANCHARD	5-10	228	36	1975-1990	Charlotte, NC	Tully Blanchard
FREDDIE BLASSIE	5-9	230	73	1937-1974	New York, NY	Fred Blassman
ROLAND BOCK	6-4	280	46	1973-1983	West Germany	Roland Bock
NICK BOCKWINKEL	6-0	235	56	1954-1987	Eagan, MN	Nicholas Bockwinkel
BOBO BRAZIL	6-4	275	66	1954-1990	Benton Harbor, MI	Houston Harris
BRUISER BRODY	6-5	280	1946-1988	1973-1988	Boerne, TX	Frank Goodish
JACK BRISCO	6-1	215	49	1966-1985	Tampa, FL	Jack Brisco
JERRY BRISCO	5-9½	200	46	1970-1985	Tampa, FL	Jerry Brisco

NAME	Height	Weight	Age as of 1/1/91	Years as a Pro	Hometown	Real Name
BULLDOG BROWER	5-10	265	55	1957-1982	Toronto, Ontario	Richard Brower
DICK THE BRUISER	6-0	255	61	1956-1989	Indianapolis, IN	Richard Afflis
KING KONG BUNDY	6-4	430	32	1976-1987	Atlantic City, NJ	Chris Pallies
HAYSTACKS CALHOUN	6-3	525	1935-1989	1957-1979	McKinney, TX	William Calhoun
EDOUARDO CARPENTIER	5-7	210	63	1953-1984	Montreal, Québec	Edward Wiecz
THE CRUSHER	5-10	240	64	1950-1987	Milwaukee, WI	Reggie Lisowski
BLUE DEMON SR.	5-5	165	68	1946-1989		Luis Rabadan
THE DESTROYER	5-9	215	60	1954-1990	Akron, NY	Richard Beyer
COWBOY BOB ELLIS	6-2	225	58	1954-1979		Bob Ellis
GREG GAGNE	5-10	190	42	1973-1989	Mound, MN	Greg Gagne
VERNE GAGNE	5-11	225	64	1949-1981	Mound, MN	Verne Gagne
TONY GAREA	6-1	225	45	1964-1986		Tony Garea
GORGEOUS GEORGE	5-9	195	1916-1963	1937-1963		Raymond George Wagner
PEPPER GOMEZ	5-7	215	57	1953-1980	San Francisco, CA	Joseph Serapio Palmino Gomez
KARL GOTCH	6-0	235	66	1955-1982	Belgium	Karl Istaz
SUPERSTAR BILLY GRAHAM	6-3½	265	47	1969-1987	Los Angeles, CA	Wayne Coleman
MIKE GRAHAM	5-5	190	39	1972-1989	Tampa, FL	Michael Gossett
GINO HERNANDEZ	5-11	210	1957-1986	1975-1986	Houston, TX	Charles Wolfe
DANNY HODGE	5-10	205	58	1958-1975	Perry, OK	Danny Hodge
HORST HOFFMAN	6-2	240	50	1961-1983		Horst Hoffman
DICK HUTTON	6-0½	245	61	1951-1962		Dick Hutton
KING CURTIS IAUKEA	5-11	310	54	1958-1982	Honolulu, HI	Curtis Iaukea
ANTONIO INOKI	6-1	220	47	1960-1990	Yokohama, Japan	Antonio Inoki
ROCKY JOHNSON	6-0	255	49	1964-1988	Halifax, Nova Scotia	
DON LEO JONATHAN	6-5	290	58	1952-1979	Salt Lake City, UT	Don Leo Jonathan
KILLER KHAN	6-4	280	43	1971-1988	Niigata, Japan	Masashi Ozawa
GENE KINISKI	6-3	265	66	1952-1983	Blaine, WA	Gene Kiniski
SHOZO KOBAYASHI	6-0½	248	49	1967-1981	Tokyo, Japan	Shozo Kobayashi
KILLER KOWALSKI	6-6	280	66	1947-1980	Detroit, MI	Wladek Kowalski
KILLER KARL KOX	5-10	245	61	1948-1983	Dallas, TX	Herb Gerwig
ERNIE LADD	6-9	325	52	1962-1985	Houston, TX	Ernie Ladd
BLACKJACK LANZA	6-4	235	49	1963-1984	Minneapolis, MN	Jack Lanza
JOS LEDUC	6-2	285	45	1965-1989	Montreal, Québec	Jos LeDuc
MARK LEWIN	6-1	245	53	1954-1987	Honolulu, HI	Mark Lewin
MISSING LINK	6-0	245	53	1965-1988	Hamilton, Ontario	Byron Robertson
JOSE LOTHARIO	5-8	210	54	1956-1984	San Antonio, TX	Jose Lothario Garcia
MAGNUM T.A.	6-1½	235	31	1979-1986	Virginia Beach, VA	Terry Allen
HIRO MATSUDA	5-9	210	53	1957-1982	Tampa, FL	Hiro Matsuda
YOSHIMURA MICHIAKI	5-9	215	50	1954-1972		Yoshimura Michiaki
MARIO MILANO	6-2	235	55	1957-1985	Sydney, Australia	
BIG BILL MILLER	6-4½	285	63	1950-1976	Columbus, OH	Bill Miller
GORILLA MONSOON	6-4	350	52	1960-1980	Buffalo, NY	Robert Marcella
PEDRO MORALES	5-11½	240	48	1958-1987		Pedro Morales
ANGELO MOSCA	6-3	300	50	1966-1985	Toronto, Ontario	Angelo Mosca
BLACKJACK MULLIGAN	6-5	280	49	1969-1989	Tampa, FL	Robert Windham
PAT O'CONNOR	5-11	225	1923-1990	1950-1981	Wellington, NZ	Pat O'Connor
KINTARO OKI	5-9	240	57	1959-1980	Seoul, South Korea	Kim Ill
PAT PATTERSON	5-10	220	50	1962-1985	Tampa, FL	
JOHNNY POWERS	6-2	235	49	1960-1980	Cleveland, OH	
JOHN QUINN	6-3	275	49	1965-1988		John Quinn
APACHE BULL RAMOS	5-10	320	55	1956-1982	Houston, TX	
RIKIDOZAN	5-8½	235	1928-1963	1951-1963	Tokyo, Japan	Mitsuo Momota, Sr.

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VICTOR RIVERA	5-11	215	47	1962-1979	Los Angeles, CA	Victor Rivera
BILLY ROBINSON	6-1	235	51	1956-1985	Minneapolis, MN	Billy Robinson
ARGENTINA ROCCA	5-8½	205	1923-1977	1950-1977		Antonino Rocca
BUDDY ROGERS	5-10	225	69	1939-1963, 1978-79	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Herman Rohde
BOB ROOP	6-0	260	48	1969-1987	Miami, FL	Robert Roop
NELSON ROYAL	5-8	215	59	1955-1989	Mooresville, NC	Nelson Royal
SEIJI SAKAGUCHI	6-5	280	48	1967-1990	Kurume, Japan	Seiji Sakaguchi
BRUNO SAMMARTINO	5-10	265	55	1958-1987	Pittsburgh, PA	Bruno Sammartino
EL SANTO	5-7	170	1917-1984	1937-1982	Mexico City	Rudolfo Guzman Huerta
DUTCH SAVAGE	6-3	260	56	1958-1981	Seattle, WA	Lionel Stuart
SATORU SAYAMA	5-6	175	33	1977-1985	Tokyo, Japan	Satoru Sayama
HANS SCHMIDT	6-3	245	67	1946-1975		Guy LaRose
THE SHEIK	5-9	225	66	1952-1989	Detroit, MI	Edmund Farhat
DARA SINGH	5-11	230	60	1951-1969		Dara Singh
EL SOLITARIO	5-7½	180	1944-1986	1960-1986	Mexico City	
WILBUR SNYDER	6-2	235	61	1952-1983	Tampa, FL	Wilbur Snyder
THE SPOILER	6-4	255	49	1960-1986	San Antonio, TX	Don Jardine
STAN STASIAK	6-3	260	51	1959-1982	Toronto, Ontario	
GEORGE STEELE	6-2	275	53	1960-1988	Detroit, MI	James Meyers
MONGOLIAN STOMPER	5-11	248	55	1961-1990	Knoxville, TN	Archie Gouldie
BIG JOHN STUDD	6-6½	320	42	1972-1989	Butler, PA	John Minton
CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW	5-10	255	55	1958-1984	Atlanta, GA	Joseph Scarpa
KEVIN SULLIVAN	5-6	235	41	1970-1990	Cambridge, MA	Kevin Sullivan
TORU TANAKA	5-10	266	52	1960-1986	Los Angeles, CA	
LOU THESZ	6-2	225	74	1935-1982	Roanoke, VA	Lajos Tiza
SAILOR ART THOMAS	6-2	250	57	1956-1982	Indianapolis, IN	Art Thomas
LES THORNTON	5-8	220	56	1957-1987	Calgary, Alberta	Leslie Thornton
JOHN TOLOS	5-11	230	59	1950-1984	Los Angeles, CA	John Tolos
TOYONOBORI	5-7	240	59	1954-1972	Tokyo, Japan	
UMANOSUKE UEDA	6-0	242	50	1961-1988	Aichi, Japan	Umanosuke Ueda
MAD DOG VACHON	5-6	215	67	1951-1986	Omaha, NE	Maurice Vachon
JOHNNY VALENTINE	6-2	235	61	1947-1975	Fort Worth, TX	John Wisniski, Sr.
JESSE VENTURA	6-2½	255	39	1975-1986	Brooklyn Park, MN	James Janos
DAVID VON ERICH	6-7	235	1958-1984	1977-1984	Lake Dallas, TX	David Adkisson
FRITZ VON ERICH	6-3	265	62	1954-1982	Tyler, TX	Jack Adkisson
BARON VON RASCHKE	6-2	255	49	1965-1990	Minneapolis, MN	James Raschke
WHIPPER BILLY WATSON	5-7	210	1919-1990	1936-1975	Toronto, Ontario	William Potts
COWBOY BILL WATTS	6-3	290	51	1962-1986	Bixby, OK	William Watts
TIM "MR. WRESTLING" WOODS	5-10	225	55	1961-1981	Atlanta, GA	Tim Woodin
MR. WRESTLING II	5-9½	215	58	1953-1990	Atlanta, GA	Johnny Walker
BEARCAT WRIGHT	6-5	260	1936-1987	1953-1977		Edward Wright
KOTETSU YAMAMOTO	5-6	220	49	1963-1980		Kotetsu Yamamoto
JAY YOUNGBLOOD	5-9	220	1958-1986	1977-1986	Amarillo, TX	Steven Romero